

MYTH AND SYMBOL

Symbolism in Prehistoric Religions

by Ariel Golan

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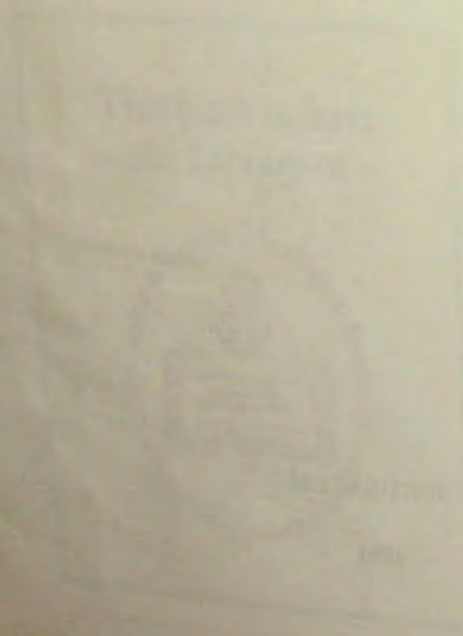
JERUSALEM

1991

MYTH AND SYMBOL

Symbolism in Prehistoric Religions

by Sir James G. Frazer



*This book is dedicated to the
memory of my wife, a true
friend, who was the first to
read and appreciate this work*

Ariel Golan
MYTH AND SYMBOL:
Symbolism in Prehistoric Religions

Translated from the Russian
by Rita Schneider-Teteruk

English editing: Mira Reich

Printed in Jerusalem, Israel, 1991.

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ISBN 965-222-245-3

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Time has preserved various ancient schematic designs (such as human forms, bull's heads, birds, snakes, etc.), as well as abstract patterns (crosses, rosettes, stars, spirals, labyrinths, and so on). The meaning of these images had been forgotten by the time a written language emerged. But they continued to be used in ornamental folk art up to the nineteenth century. Attempts have been made during the last 100 years to decipher their meaning. However, these interpretations were largely dubious or entirely mistaken, being too often based on a subjective approach.

Using comprehensive analyses and cross-correlations of the designs proper and of numerous data on mythology, archeology, ethnography, and linguistics, the author, over two decades of painstaking effort, has deciphered about half of these graphemes reliably and the majority of the others with varying degrees of certainty.

All the designs analyzed are symbols, or, more specifically, conventional graphic representations of religious notions. In deciphering these symbols it has become possible to reconstruct the long forgotten religion which first took shape during the Paleolithic Age — some twenty to thirty thousand years ago — and reached its highest development among Neolithic farming tribes of Southeastern Europe and Western Asia in the tenth to fourth millennia B.C. The corresponding religious beliefs and the related symbolism spread from this region to territories inhabited by other tribes and sometimes even reached the Far East, Equatorial Africa, and pre-Columbian America.

By the end of the third millennium B.C., the early farming tribes were almost completely extinct. New religions emerged, in most cases antagonistic to the Neolithic religion, but nevertheless assimilating many of its elements, although the latter underwent changes in the process. In particular, the semantics of the graphic symbols changed. Whatever survived from the religious practices of the earliest agriculturists became incorporated in numerous later myths, fairy tales, and rites. In addition, some fragmentary data on that religion may be drawn from ancient written sources. All this, supplemented by the results achieved by deciphering the symbols, made it possible to reconstruct the religion which existed before written language came into being. A system of concepts, unusual from the point of view of modern ideas, thus came to light.

The content of the Neolithic beliefs, properly disclosed, will enable us to understand the origin of many customs, traditional festivals, rituals, games, mythopoetical images, fetishes, ethnonyms, geographical names, and verbal expressions, and will facilitate etymological studies of words in different languages. The present investigation sheds new light on the distant past, provides a clue to an understanding of numerous phenomena in the history of culture, and may lead to new discoveries in sciences such as ancient history, history of religion, mythology, folklore studies, and linguistics. This work may also arouse the interest of mathematicians, because the methods of mathematical analysis are, in the author's opinion, applicable to ancient symbolism. The author would also express the hope that his investigation will help overcome pagan atavisms in our conceptions of God.

This book is a scientific study. However, the material is described in a form which can be understood by any educated reader. The book is intended for those who would like to solve the mysteries of mankind's past spiritual culture, from which so much of the present has been inherited.

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1991

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The contents of this book, the methodological presumptions and the conclusions drawn, in many cases do not conform to the conventional opinions held by scientists in this particular field. Most reviewers of this work (judging it, unfortunately, only on the basis of excerpts from the manuscript or uncoordinated communications) have generally been skeptical. Why? The facts are reliable (there is no denying this), the reasoning seems quite logical, and the conclusions follow from an analysis of the evidence. The point is that everyone has his own logic and line of reasoning; otherwise everything would be too simple in science, as in life.

Over many years, while collecting information, working on and sorting out my inferences, discarding earlier conclusions and replacing them with new ones, I was not sure that I was coming nearer the truth. The sense of reaching truth came when new materials no longer cast doubt on the hypotheses, but rather supported them, when new evidence fitted into a system and could be accounted for within that system.

Yet to what extent can all this be convincing to others? An isolated fact may be interpreted arbitrarily, several facts may lead to an erroneous conclusion; however, in this study the facts are too numerous and the connection between them too obvious, thus providing every reason to believe that the theory is sufficiently well founded.

It is but human to reject judgements which do not correspond to one's own concepts. Logic, however sound, does not help in such a case. Every argument can be confronted with a counter-argument. People argue at different levels — in scientific bodies, on local trains, in quarrels between spouses or neighbors; and yet notwithstanding the optimistic idea that the truth is conceived in debate, all parties to the debate stick to their original opinions. The superior law of worldly (and, unfortunately, scientific) logic reads: "You are wrong because I choose to differ." However, this work is meant for a reader capable of an open mind toward what he reads.

I would also like to offer another comment. This book considers the story of symbols and certain customs. The reader will see that in the past they had quite other meanings than those we attach to them today. This does not mean that I urge they be rejected because once upon a time they expressed ideas now alien to us. Such thinking would lead us into a blind alley. Cult symbols like the cross, six-pointed star, and crescent have come down to us from the distant pagan past, but that is no ground for ridiculing them. The handshake, wedding ring, and gravestone once expressed ideas which we today might consider indecent, but that does not mean we should discard such customs. If the author demonstrates the past of symbols and customs, that does not mean he repudiates them.

Culture does not arise on a bare stage. At every new level it makes use of what had already been accumulated, including symbols and customs (in essence, customs are also symbols). Formal signs took hold and became part of culture; as history demonstrates, they duly serve as essential forms, although new meanings are seen in them. Symbols are as important for ideas as vessels for wine. Without the vessel, there is nothing to store the wine in. We have given up old ideas, but we need not smash the old vessels.

Rambam (Maimonides) discussed the perplexity over this problem as early as 800 years ago. He was aware that Judaism gave new meanings to idolatrous customs, turning them into a medium reflecting belief in one God. Such, for instance, are the commandments concerning sacrificial offerings. "The custom of immolating animals," he wrote, "once existed all over the world. The Most High did not abolish this custom, because in those times man was not ready for such a ban."

The reader will see that some customs of different peoples are found to be similar. But that does not deny national originality. If monotheistic religions have formal elements and rituals adopted from paganism by tradition, it does not signify that those religions are defective or that their rituals are ambiguous. Rituals are symbols, and symbols are essential for fixing ideas in a culture. Symbols prove steadfast when they are hallowed by tradition.

While reading this book, on the face of it the impression may arise that science contradicts religion. But this only seems so because people tend to imagine for themselves a simplified model of the world. In reality, though, any understanding of the universe contradicts some facts that may prompt other understanding. The world of God is too complicated for human possibility of realising it.

INTRODUCTION

Graphic patterns that do not always represent elements of a visually perceptible human habitat (i.e., objects or living beings) are encountered on material relics of the past (structures, tombstones, utensils, pieces of clothing, etc.) as well as on rock walls and stones. They can be traced to prehistoric times and were common in ornamental folk art up to the early twentieth century. These graphemes, recurring over thousands of years, moving from people to people, show remarkable stability both in design and in the mere fact of their existence. Such patterns, which often look like mere ornaments, are in fact symbols that used to have a meaning, ideographs¹ which were a way of recording certain concepts or notions long before written language came into being.

Ancient symbols had a variety of meanings. In addition to designs used for cult purposes, there were others, such as tribal emblems, marks of ownership, and pointers. The former, however, were in common use and experienced little change. Their meaning was forgotten in the course of time, and they became nothing more than decorations. To be more precise, ornamental patterns became part of everyday life long before the meaning of the designs started to be obliterated. Ornamental carving 20 to 10 thousand years old is decorative as well as symbolic; this also applies to the highly artistic decorated pottery created between 7000 and 3000 B.C.

The medieval architectural ornament of highland Daghestan is remarkably archaic; it represents the stage of evolution of the ancient symbolic designs when they had not yet turned entirely into mere adornment. Ancient graphic symbols are expressly inherent here (Fig. 1). The location of the ornament at particular points of Daghestan structures is also indicative of its semantic as well as compositional function. For example, in three-story buildings with cattle-sheds at the lower level and haylofts over them, the ornament occurs on the façade and on the architectural forms of the third level, the living quarters. It is hardly visible from below, but this was most probably of no significance. What did matter was its presence. Similarly, in old Georgian (the Caucasus) houses the ornamentation on parts of the hearth was located in such a way that it could often not be seen; it was probably more important to have these images face the fire. In Ancient China the

¹ *Ideograph*: A graphic symbol representing an object or idea without expressing, as in a phonetic system, the sounds that form its name; a pictorial representation of an idea of object [Webster]. The science dealing with written language uses this term for a sign denoting a word in a certain language. Symbols, on the other hand, designate not individual words, but more general notions. In special literature the term *ideograph* is used also for ancient symbolic signs, and it is in this meaning that it is used in this book.

lower part of the grave stela, bearing a pictorial design, was buried in the ground. Sometimes ancient objects have ornamental patterns in portions not readily available for inspection — bottoms of vessels or the reverse side of plaques worn on garments.

Daghestanian architectural ornament is developed from graphic symbols used for practical purposes: this symbolism had a (religious) interpretation of reality and was intended for (magically) influencing conditions of life. In modern culture the ornament is no more than decoration, non-functional adornment. In the distant past, however, much importance was attached to these patterns.

Magic rites seem impractical and even absurd to modern people. Primitive thinking, however, considered them perfectly justified and essential in influencing reality. In accordance with ancient Indian (in Asia) religious practices, cult rites were regarded as no less important than labor [211, p. 8]. A Veda verse reads that soma (an intoxicating drink) will not possess its qualities unless its preparation is accompanied by prayer [397b, p. 225]. The Ossets believed that successful hunting depended on skilful worship of Avsati, the divine patron of hunters [220, p. 115]. Inhabitants of medieval Daghestan must have regarded magic symbols as an integral part of their structures. "Ornamentation in ancient architecture, endowed with symbolic meaning, sometimes with connotations of magic, was considered itself an indispensable functional element of the structure" [209, p. 139].

It was not only faith in the magic power of the images which made them so significant. In them people recorded and conveyed to their contemporaries and to future generations what seemed to them vitally important information. As a result, these symbols acquired the significance of generic memory and reflected relationships between members of the tribe.

B. Rybakov, a student of ancient symbolism, puts it this way: "Part of the subject matter, decorations, and elements of ornamental designs, which were obviously intended for magic and sorcery, once served for ensuring prosperity or as amulets against evil. Our distant ancestor felt reassured and joyous at the sight of these amulets, and hence, from this joy there emerged the sense of the beautiful" [471, p. 399]. When the original meaning of the ancient graphemes was forgotten, the images continued to be used as "necessary," though nobody any longer realized what the necessity was. Serving as signals which appealed to man's aesthetic sense, they were now perceived and employed as adornment.

* * *

Various ways of writing, i.e., graphical recording of information, were devised in the course of the development of human culture. In particular, a figurative design could be a graphic expression of certain ideas; several drawings linked by a common meaning could be used to convey a message or a story. Such pictographic (based on drawings) writing was employed by some tribes well into the twentieth century. Pictographs did not record speech, but rather conveyed information through illustrations. As time went on, they became symbols expressing certain notions (words) and were eventually commonly adopted. Thus did hieroglyphic writing come into being.

At the same time designs appeared which did not serve for telling stories or for conveying information, but were symbols representing certain general ideas. A logical analysis of these symbols shows that they played the role of magic formulas, were graphically recorded supplicatory prayers to supreme powers. Their meaning changed in the course of time due to variations in cult notions. As thousands of years went by, the secondary meaning of the symbols was also forgotten. But they continued to be used, as these designs had been consecrated by tradition.

Students of pagan religions point out that even though images inherent in particular cults sometimes remained unchanged over millennia, the meaning attached to these images varied.² An additional circumstance interferes with an understanding of ancient cult symbols: the notions they designated were rather obscure, because pagan beliefs, as S. Tokarev, an expert in non-canonical religions, remarks, "do not have a clearly defined character" [520, p. 20].

Yet, notwithstanding the difficulties one encounters in trying to decode the semantics of ancient symbols, this can be accomplished to a certain extent. The meaning of these symbols, when understood, may help us to get an insight into the ancient way of thinking. A study of the cult symbols which took shape thousands of years ago, shows that people at the time, although their living conditions were miserable and their technology primitive, were relatively well aware of the world around them, though they interpreted it in mythological terms. This is testified, in particular, by ancient literary monuments, such as the Bible, the Vedas, or the Gilgamesh legend.

Through the study of ancient symbols we come closer to an understanding of mankind's prehistory, of the distant epochs which left no written documents and which can only be judged in terms of material relics preserved by time, fragments of legends, linguistics and anthropological information. The point is that cult symbols are a most stable element in culture. Customs, clothing, and other forms of culture change, but symbols remain essentially the same over thousands of years. If some transformation occurs, it is quite insignificant. In the conditions of the highly stable tenor of life existing prior to the development of the civilization, these motifs were transmitted traditionally and were carefully reproduced over generations. S. Ivanov, a student of ornament, has noted: "Folk ornament is a

²The difference between pagan and non-pagan religions consists, among other things, in that the former are based on oral tradition (hence the lack of stability and a certain vagueness in the beliefs and rituals), while the latter are textually recorded and could therefore be canonized.

relatively stable element of artistic culture; it has reached us through hundreds, even thousands of years" [203, p. 23]. Ancient symbols exhibited extraordinary consistency against the background of changes in cults and ideology. This may be exemplified by the survival of pagan symbols until the nineteenth century among Eastern Slavs and Daghestanians, despite the many centuries of domination by Christianity and Islam.

The presence and frequency of occurrence of particular ornamental motifs in the decorative art of a people may provide information on its distant ancestors or at least on ethnocultural relationships during its prehistoric period. Cult symbols reflect the oldest strata of the spiritual culture of an ethnic community. True, the stability of religious and ideological conceptions and of the related symbols is only relative. Customs and concepts underwent diffusion; "cultural invasions" and "cultural confusions" took place. In view of the fact that decorative and symbolic forms were exposed to cultural influences, it is essential to identify the indigenous features in the ornamental art of a people. Certain ornamental motifs, at present quite common and seemingly typical of an ethnical group, might in fact have come into use much more recently, while others which do not now appear significant may prove to arise from a tradition shaped thousands of years ago.

* * *

Were similar symbols created by different peoples independently, convergently,³ or did they spread to other regions after emerging in one place?

V. Darkevich, who dealt with ancient symbols, writes: "Uniformity of religious beliefs associated with heavenly bodies is responsible for the similar embodiment of these beliefs (similar ideograph signs, similar forms of worship), irrespective of ethnic identity of the believers, irrespective of territorial or chronological boundaries" [137, p. 56]. One cannot, however, agree with this declaration. The assumption of "uniformity of religious beliefs associated with heavenly bodies" is simply incorrect. But, more important, the above explanation explains nothing. Even if one assumes that the ancient Greeks, the inhabitants of the mountainous Caucasus or of India had identical beliefs (which is known not to be case), how could these beliefs have led independently to the invention, for example, of a swastika as a cult symbol?

It is not easy to account for the similarity of phenomena observed in different cultures. The reason for the similarity is not always obvious. Some scholars explain it by the diffusion of ideas, others by common evolutionary patterns, still others by common features of human psychology, or the influence of similar conditions, or random coincidence, or else no explanation whatever is offered. The present author agrees with B. Moisheson who writes: "When two phenomena are all of a sudden found to exhibit a coincidence of several properties, it is hard to shake off

³The term *convergent* is used in biology for similar forms whose similarity is due not to kinship of the organisms, but to identical conditions of existence. This term is also used in archeology and ethnology with respect to phenomena of human material and spiritual culture.

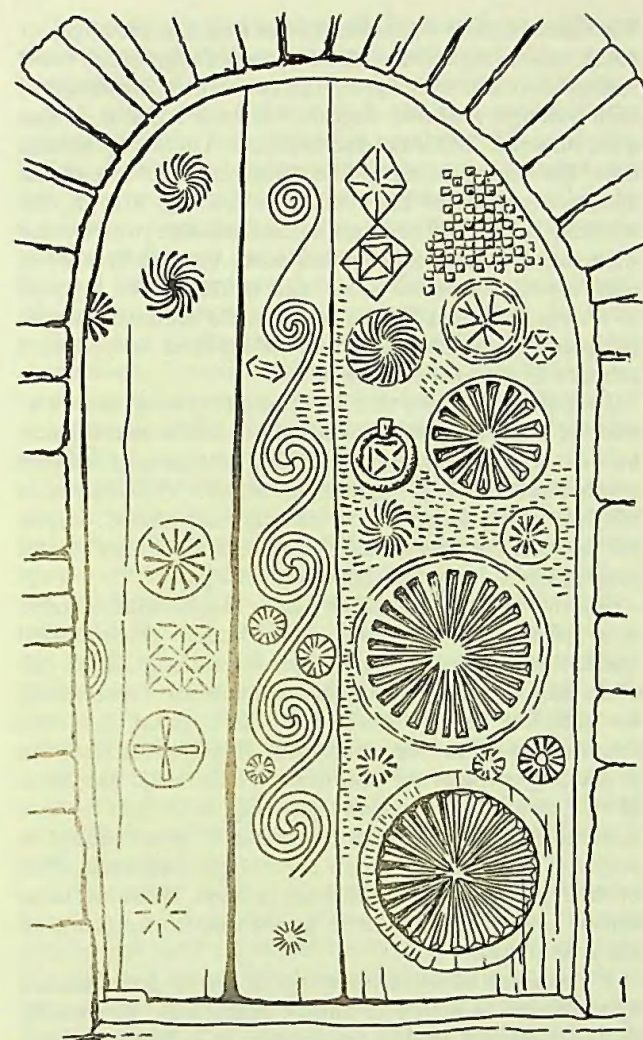


Fig. 1. Wood carving in Daghestan: 1, 2 — doors in the villages of Tlondoda and Tanta.

the impression that there is a common cause behind these coincidences, something mysterious and important, though not immediately apparent. A historian, when analyzing past events, is unable to test his findings experimentally. In this case mentioning and listing various coincidences, especially those of multiple occurrence, is about the only way of verification. This method is employed to prove the correctness of deciphering of ancient written documents and the primordial affinity between languages and archeological cultures" [379, II, p. 227].

The present study, by analyzing ancient symbols, compares similar graphic designs sampled from different parts of the world and from different historical epochs. To what extent is this procedure justified?

The external similarity of objects does not, in itself, point to their common origin. Whales and dolphins are not fish, despite their being shaped like fish. Natural science finds it possible, nevertheless, to classify the diverse forms of nature, to compare various living beings, and to establish relationships between them in terms of their characteristics.

Similarity between ancient graphic symbols as well as between related cult and mythological phenomena in various ethnic communities is not unusual in human culture. A



distant but undeniable common origin has been revealed in languages like those of the Berbers, Finns, and Mongols.⁴ It is now generally recognized that these peoples, so different in their characteristics and living so far apart, speak languages which can be traced to a common origin. Why then should one rule out the possibility that the archaic religious practices of Eurasian peoples were originally interconnected, particularly since there is evidence supporting this hypothesis, whereas the absence of such relations has not been proved but has simply been adopted as an axiom?

Similarities in the phenomena of material and spiritual culture have been postulated as due to similarities in the conditions under which these phenomena took shape. This is true to some extent only. Inhabitants of the Old and New Worlds could have arrived independently at the decision to build gable roofs over their structures, as this architectural feature is suggested by objective factors. But when peoples

⁴The Indo-European, Semito-Hamitic, Kartvelian, Uralian, Altaian, and Dravidian languages evolved from the oldest progenitor language conventionally referred to as Nostratic. No less noteworthy is the occurrence of so-called Sino-Caucasian languages which include the Northern Caucasian, Hattian, Basque, Chinese, Tibetan, and Yeniseian; the language of a single people that once inhabited a certain locality was the progenitor of all these languages.

separated by vast expanses of ocean painted snakes on the walls of their dwellings, this can only suggest the possibility that these practices were of the same origin, as no objective living conditions could be responsible for them. On the other hand, how could similarity in religious beliefs, which might find expression in snake worship or in the concept of an association between the snake and the dwelling, be due to natural geographic, practical, productive or everyday social causes? (At any rate, no such dependence has been shown). Agriculture might have developed independently in the Old and New Worlds, but if American Indians and the ancient populations of Eastern Europe, concerned for their crops, appealed to heaven for rain holding the left hand on the waist and the right above the head, it is impossible to account for this prayer position by similar conditions in both cases.

A scientific approach requires specific analysis of evidence, rather than reference to allegedly universal rules. Moreover, the rules themselves may be found questionable if studied in depth. Then we hear a peremptory remark: "It has long been common knowledge that similar elements of material and spiritual culture, as well as of social order, inevitably emerge at identical stages of social evolution; and in similar landscape and climatic environments elements of culture develop, characteristic of such environments" [242, p. 7]. This dogma, however, does not march with the facts. The argument that "it has long been common knowledge" is resorted to when one wishes to pass off a subjective opinion for a truth. It has long been common knowledge that the earth is flat, that demons in the underworld fry the damned in frying-pans, that the striking harmony and complexity of nature is due to a fortuitous cohesion of molecules and subsequent spontaneous evolution, etc. Postgraduate students and hopeful scholars echo: "The common character of the symbols was due to objective living conditions" [83, p. 99].

The work of an investigator is no less laborious than that of a navvy. And it is less gratifying in terms of the probability of solving the problem. It is possible, of course, to skip the stage of hard labor by attributing striking analogies to chance coincidence. In this connection A. Gorbovsky, the author of a publication dealing with this type of analogies, rightly remarks: "Coincidence? Hardly. Coincidences are more likely to occur in fields where relationships between phenomena can be explained logically. Why, for example, was the number 13 considered special, magical, by both the Maya and European nations?" [118, p. 80].

Drawings by different peoples might naturally be similar when visually recognizable objects were depicted. This explanation does not apply, however, when one analyzes similarities in abstract images, because these similarities are not objectively motivated. Simple, elementary graphic patterns might turn out identical by mere chance; but this cannot be the case when one deals with complex images; the theory of probability rules out random coincidence of complex systems.

The complex structure of numerous graphemes argues against their recurrent independent conception. Here is an example. Take a symbol shaped like an X (an oblique cross), in which there is a dot in three of the four segments.

The figure X, even when inscribed in a square, rectangle, or circle, may be regarded as an elementary design which could emerge over and over again. The convergent formation of such a design with four dots, one in each segment, is also quite plausible. But if the dots are located in three segments only, the fourth being unfilled (this is the oldest of the known examples of the symbol — see Fig. 218: 2), the resulting system will be irregular and unstable (which those who actually drew this symbol seem to have sensed, as they sometimes placed some sign in the fourth segment — see Fig. 218: 1, 3). Such a design could not have emerged independently once again, and its repeated independent creation is out of the question.

Even if one assumes that the reason for the repeated creation of a certain grapheme is due to random coincidence, how can one account for a great deal of analogies between graphemes? The only logically acceptable explanation in this case is that such patterns are originally related, despite the fact that they may belong to cultures separated by vast geographic expanses and chronological gaps.

Another way to explain analogies in dissimilar cultures is by reference to the similarity in human psychological traits. But those resorting to such an assumption do not undertake to prove it by concrete evidence. Incantations are sufficient for the worshiper. The scientist, however, does not just believe, he needs proof. How, for instance, can psychology explain the occurrence of the same grapheme of two connected S-shaped signs (Fig. 120: 1, 2) in both Ancient Crete and medieval Daghestan? It is not enough to attribute this to the common psychological characteristics of the representatives of different cultures. What has to be shown is how this similarity would lead convergently to the given result.

If instances of identical symbols are to be explained by the common nature of human psychology, this quality should apply not only to the creators of a certain symbol, but also to those who are now decoding it. However, there is no trace of communality in the psychology of the decoders. What, for example, is the meaning of the symbol "cross and crescent" (Figs. 72, 190)? Interpretations offered by different authors include: the triumph of Christianity over Islam; the sun and the moon; the anchor; a plant in a vase; man in a boat. Had it been so simple to tackle the riddles which human thought encounters, it would have been quite easy to make science.

It is not always possible to illustrate the kinship of similar graphemes by producing a continuous chain of data showing relationships between particular analogies in time and space, for not much is left of the ancient designs, and we are now dealing with isolated survivors of ancient graphic art, which do not immediately exhibit any apparent continuity. In this situation one is perfectly justified to deduce the original affinities of particular graphic figures on the basis of their external similarity. For example, if a pattern specified as *labyrinth* is found on both an Etruscan vase of the 6th century B.C. and the wall of an 18th century Daghestan structure, it can be concluded that these are related phenomena, since the chance coincidence or convergent emergence of such designs is impossible; we are unable, however, to reconstruct the genealogical tree of which the above two phenomena would be branches.

The conclusion that symbols of the same type in different cultures have a common origin is based not only on the impossibility of accounting for their numerous analogies in any other way. Other proofs are also available: the symbols are relatively limited in number, whereas if they had been conceived independently in each particular culture, they would have been innumerable; they tend to be confined to a specific region (the area of the Neolithic early farming settlement), growing sparse as one leaves that area; they are interrelated and form a definite complex system; they were used in analogous contexts, reflected the same notions, and, finally, these notions, as well as their graphic expressions, though lacking in objective motivation, are similar in different cultures (this fact cannot be explained in terms of similar conditions, or community of human psychology, or chance coincidence).

The assumption according to which similar (not infrequently perfectly identical) abstract, i.e., nonfigurative, patterns were created by different peoples in different epochs independently as a result of similar conditions of life or owing to the community of human psychology, remains unproved. The postulate that unmotivated (i.e., not produced naturally due to certain factors) forms of culture were created convergently is not only unproved, it is not even substantiated to an extent justifying its existence at least as a hypothesis. What we have here is a mental procedure exemplifying mythological thinking. It is in mythological thinking that what looks right is taken as authentic, and the idea of reality is based on faith which needs no proof.

If graphemes of the same type used to express religious beliefs did not originate anew each time among different peoples but were rather the result of a diffusion of ideas, the question arises: what caused this diffusion? Both in the past and in modern times each ethnic community sees itself as different from others, and its attitude towards neighboring tribes and peoples is one of estrangement if not hostility. Religious conceptions are a form of tribal solidarity, whereas enmity between nations found expression in religious antagonism.

However, beliefs, as they were understood by pagans, were beyond the sphere of ideology; they represented positive, practical knowledge of the surrounding world. This illusory knowledge was regarded as useful in practice, no less than, for example, a weapon — the bow and arrow — or an implement — the plow, which, having been once invented, became the property of mankind at large, knowing no geographic obstacles or ethnic barriers.

The process of the emergence and establishment of the complex of cult symbols analyzed in this book encompasses several epochs of the early history of Europe and Western Asia: Upper Paleolithic (the last stage of the Early Stone Age, 20 to 10 millennia B.C.), Mesolithic (the Middle Stone Age, 10 to 8 millennia B.C.), Neolithic (the latest period of the Stone Age, 8 to 4 millennia B.C.), Aeneolithic (a transitional period between the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, 4 to 3 millennia B.C.), and the Bronze Age (2 millennia B.C.).⁵ These long centuries saw changes in economic and social life, the disintegration of ethnic communities and the rise of new ones; new religious myths replaced old ones or interlaced with them, new symbols appeared and existing

ones underwent revision.

The present writer has come to the conclusion that in the third to the beginning of the second millennia B.C. a change took place in the meaning of cult symbols in the European — Western Asian region. Cult symbols were then already quite complex and diverse. Proto-Indo-European and the newly formed Indo-Europeanized tribes were in a state of active expansion [352; 647; 695; 699]; this process led to the disappearance of the earliest farming cultures in Europe and Western Asia, the Stone Age was superseded by the Bronze, new ethnic communities were formed, Indo-European languages were propagated, religious beliefs changed their nature, and old cult symbols were adapted to accommodate other religious practices.⁶

"Indo-European" is a conventional notion. Modern nations, as well as the ancient tribes considered to be bearers of the Indo-European tongue, are dissimilar in terms of both race and cultural characteristics. The designation "Indo-European" applies in this book to ethnic communities formed in the third to second millennia B.C. which, as believed by modern science, spoke languages of the Indo-European family; their descendants are also included in the category. The cult concepts of the ancient Indo-European tribes and peoples were not exactly similar, although they had some features in common. Likewise, the system of theological attitudes opposed to them, which this book terms the "Neolithic or Early Farming Religion," covers more or less diverse cults; the latter are not known in detail, only some of their features can be reconstructed.

* * *

Many scholars are inclined to interpret ancient designs from the standpoint of naive rationality. For example, they believe that graphic representations of horses point to the development of horse breeding; portrayals of ram horns signify the predominance of sheep and goats in the livestock; boats — seafaring or fishing; an enigmatic sign is taken to be a symbolic depiction of a trap or a harpoon meant to ensure successful hunting, etc.; human figures are the people the ancient artist saw around him; the strange figure of a half-man, half-beast is a "shaman wearing a mask"; group images — no more than everyday life scenes, and so on. However, the elementary pragmatic interpretation of cult realities furnishes no more than an ostensible solution to the problem.

Other authors, though accepting the religious content of ancient images, do not go beyond general definitions, such as the "cult of ancestors," "cult of natural productivity," "astral cult," "hunting magic," etc. But characteristics of

⁵The dating of ancient epochs is averaged and somewhat conventional. In reality the alternation of epochs proceeded non-uniformly in different places. While some tribes developed agriculture, ceramics, and metallurgy, others were still depending on gathering and hunting for survival, and were manufacturing stone and bone implements. In some places, far away from the centers of world civilization, the Stone Age lingered on well into the nineteenth century.

⁶The invasion of Indo-Europeans in the North and of Semites in the South destroyed the culture of the early farming tribes, as a result of which the level of culture in the region encompassing Southeastern Europe and Western Asia was lower in the third millennium B.C. than in the fourth millennium.

this type do not shed much light on the content of the concrete range of concepts.

Unfortunately, publications on ancient symbolism often resort to logically unjustified judgements; arbitrary interpretation of improperly understood images is also not infrequent. Some authors ascribe meanings to particular signs on a subjective basis. In order to arrive at a conclusion, one must analyze and compare all the available facts. Even then one cannot be certain that the conclusion is absolutely correct, as some facts may remain unknown, some connections overlooked or underestimated. Cognition is therefore such a difficult and infinite process.

To derive the meaning of unintelligible signs, one should not rely on current popular opinion, because it may be based on chance associations and is no more valuable than popular etymology is in linguistics. Likewise, the investigator should not draw conclusions from a resemblance or from what seems to be a resemblance to something in the environment. The apparent similarity of an abstract image to a certain material object may lead to misinterpretation. One even encounters assumptions to the effect that a certain ancient grapheme is the result of purely compositional constructions.

The subjective approach and the inconclusiveness in interpretations of ancient symbolic images give rise to skepticism with regard to the possible deciphering of their meaning. Still, efforts by various researchers since the end of the last century to decode obscure ancient symbols have produced certain results and enabled this author to proceed with his investigations in the field.

The present study of ancient symbols uses the entire range of signs, about one hundred semantic units, rather than individual symbols. This enabled cross-correlation and coordination of the meanings of different symbols, i.e., the use of the "crossword puzzle" technique, in which the correct choice is confirmed by matching across and down. The resulting pattern illustrates cult concepts, which, before the appearance of written language, were expressed through the complex of the graphemes in question. Reconstructed religious concepts of the prehistoric period and interpretations of symbols were checked against known data from mythology, history of religion, archeology, ethnography, folklore studies, and ancient written items. Cross-correlation of various pieces of information and of reconstructions corroborated the proposed deciphering of ancient symbols. The author has attempted to make his reasoning logically consistent and to substantiate his conclusions by argumentation. Where the data were inadequately conclusive, they are presented as hypotheses.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency in science to advance a situation as though science is omniscient. Scholars often dare not admit: "I do not know"; lack of knowledge is coated with phrases intended to produce an impression of knowledge. This may contribute to personal prestige, but is detrimental to science and to the desire of the human intellect to reach the truth. The author tried to avoid such blunders and allowed himself to expound his views to the degree of certainty permitted by the degree of reliability of the conclusions derived from analysis of the evidence in each case. The lack of certainty occasionally occurring in the author's treatment of particular problems

is due not only to the insufficiency of available data, but also to the nature of the material itself.

An attentive reader will notice some inconsistency in nomenclature: this work does not clearly differentiate between the terms "sign" and "symbol" or "grapheme" and "ideograph". This is due to the vagueness of the material being analyzed. The same image may be a symbol in one aspect and an emblem in another, etc.

The author has attempted to make some etymological inferences, despite the fact that linguistics is outside the sphere of his professional competence. This was done in cases where linguistic evidence could be used to support other types of information; yet another objective was to draw the attention of linguists, without any intention to encroach on their field of expertise, to mythology as a word-building factor. The author is quite aware that some (or many) of his linguistic constructions will be found incorrect; but some of them may be valid.

In his attempts to decipher the meaning of ancient graphic symbols, to find the sources of myths and the origin of traditional rites, the author had to use material from different fields of science. In the present epoch, characterized by segmentation of knowledge, by the enormous scope of information and extremely involved methods of research, true experts even in one particular field are rare; nobody can be an expert in several sciences. This study may therefore contain factual errors or wrong judgements. How can it be otherwise? This book is intended for a reader lenient to minor shortcomings, who will pay attention to the essential points. The ancient Greeks invented a way of conducting polemics by finding vulnerable points in the opponent's judgements, thereby attacking his entire conception and casting doubt on his integrity. Such a method is applied widely and successfully in modern science, but the author hopes that not all readers will find it necessary to resort to it.

* * *

This book contains illustrations of images observed by the author during field studies in the mountains of Daghestan; some of the illustrations were taken from other publications, in which case the original source is mentioned. The Daghestan materials for which no reference is given were collected by this author (all photographs and part of the drawings).

In transliterating from languages using non-Latin alphabets, the following characters were adopted for sounds with no direct equivalents in the Latin alphabet:

z ž š č ğ ħ
English analogs: z j sh ch ts kh

* * *

Twenty-four chapters are devoted to graphic symbols and discuss the cult concepts here referred to as "Neolithic religion." Three major chapters follow, "The Great Goddess," "The Black God," and "The White God," which reconstruct the main deities of the Neolithic religion from the examined material and establish their relationship with

cult and mythological images of later epochs. All these reconstructions taken together throw light on religion prior to the appearance of a written language.

The purpose of the study was to decipher ancient graphic symbols and to reconstruct the religious concepts expressed in the terms of these symbols. The investigation has shown that some sort of a religion existed in the Neolithic epoch, largely common to the entire region inhabited by the earliest farming communities of Western Asia and Southeastern Europe. These beliefs, as well as their related symbols, were adopted by neighboring tribes and spread further, though becoming weaker in the process and undergoing distortion. The main deities of this religion were the heaven

RAIN AND HEAVEN

In Daghestan, one can frequently observe set in the walls of buildings stones decorated with notches or carvings in the form of parallel vertical or horizontal zigzags (Fig. 2).

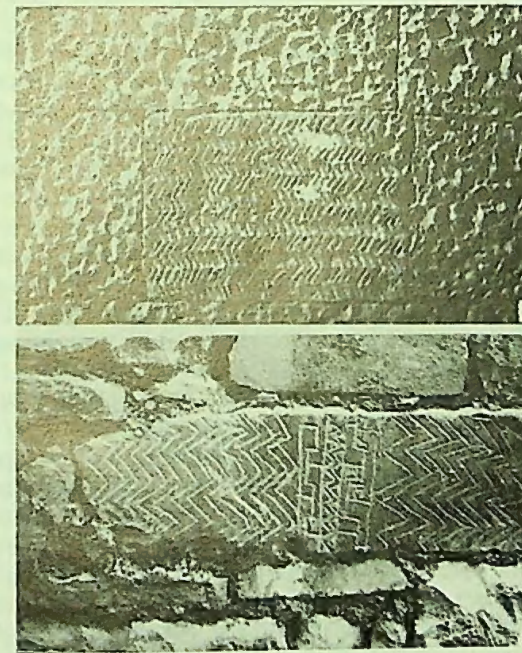


Fig. 2. Parallel zigzags on stones of masonry, Daghestan: 1 — incised stone face; 2 — engraving.

Ornament in the form of zigzags is known as far back as the Upper Paleolithic, some 25 to 12 thousand years ago. But at that time it had a special meaning.⁷ The prototype of this motif, which is part of the Daghestan ornament, first appeared in the Neolithic (about nine thousand years ago) and became common in the Bronze and Iron Ages (Fig. 3).

Zigzag ornament of this type is often encountered on European and Western Asian pottery dating from 3000—1000 B.C.; the zigzags may be either vertical or horizontal (Fig. 4: 1-4), though vertical ones are more common. This type

goddess and the earth god, as well as their children: the god of growth, the benevolent god, the twin brothers and their sister the sun goddess. The images of these deities, many-sided and vivid, were adopted to varying degrees by later mythologies and religions. The pattern of symbols of the Neolithic religion is diverse and rich in forms, as can be seen from the illustrations included in this book. Other beliefs took shape (or previously established ones became dominant) in the Bronze Age. However, the primary beliefs, rather than being discarded altogether, were adapted to later cult practices. The semantics of the symbols also underwent changes, but their forms remained virtually unchanged, only becoming more monotonous and dry.

of ornament is also characteristic of Northern Caucasian Bronze Age pottery [327, p. 33].

In some cases such vertical zigzag ceramic ornaments may be an imitation of rope impressions (Fig. 4: 5), while the horizontal zigzag could represent a wickerwork pattern (Fig. 4: 6). In the Early Neolithic period, before the potter's wheel emerged, vessels were produced by binding raw earthenware with cords or by coating wickerwork baskets with clay. This process left impressions on the pottery after baking; such impressions were later traditionally placed on articles of ceramic manufacture. This would have been the origin of ornamentation in the form of parallel series of zigzags on the pottery of the Ancient Kurgan (or, as it is referred to in Russian archeological literature, "ancient-pit") culture (the Dnieper and Volga steppe, 3000—2000 B.C. — see Fig. 417: 6, 7).⁸

This explanation is insufficient, however, when one deals with Neolithic art of Southeastern Europe and Western Asia as well as with Bronze Age monuments on a larger scale. Numerous examples of the zigzag grapheme exist in which the zigzag pattern is not originally associated with any production technology (Fig. 5). Besides, its extraordinary popularity in early farming communities is inexplicable, if one considers it as no more than a rudiment of archaic techniques of ceramic manufacture. Finally, there is evidence pointing to a specific meaning of this particular diagram.

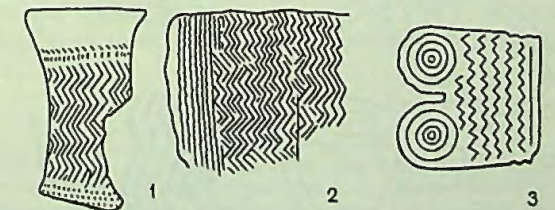


Fig. 3. Parallel zigzag ornamentation in ancient Eurasian art: 1 — Yugoslavia, Neolithic [719, p. 289]; 2 — Germany, Neolithic [799, pl. 20]; 3 — Checheno-Ingushetia, ca 500 BC [263, p. 490].

⁸The majority of scholars believe that the bearers of the Ancient Kurgan culture were Proto-Indo-Europeans who migrated to Western Europe throughout the third millennium B.C.

⁷See chapter "Tracks and Traps."

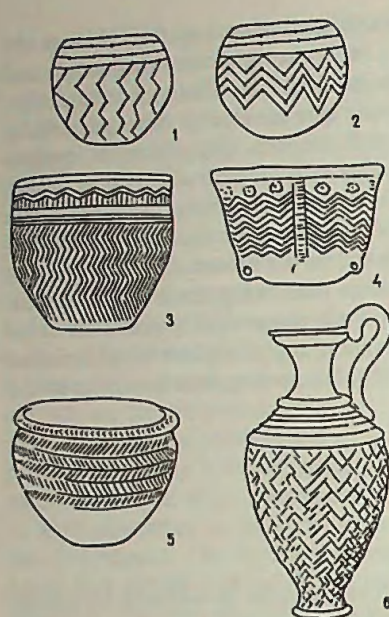


Fig. 4. Eurasian pottery with parallel zigzags, 3000-1000 BC: 1, 2 — Northern Black Sea region [579, p. 15]; 3 — Western Siberia [409, p. 171]; 4 — Central Europe [648, p. 117]; 5 — cord impresses, England [648, p. 333]; 6 — imitation of plaiting, Crete [676a, p. 412].

Students of ancient symbols have pointed out that rows of zigzags designate rain. A. Miller [361, p. 156] and B. Rybakov [465, p. 159] have written on the subject. Let us look at a decorated bowl (600-500 B.C., Silesia — see Fig. 5: 1). The sky is shown in the center (a circle with rays may depict the sun, but apart from that, as will be shown, it could also symbolize the sky). Around the perimeter are outlines of three hills; this is the earth with cultivated fields, the furrows represented by hatching. We

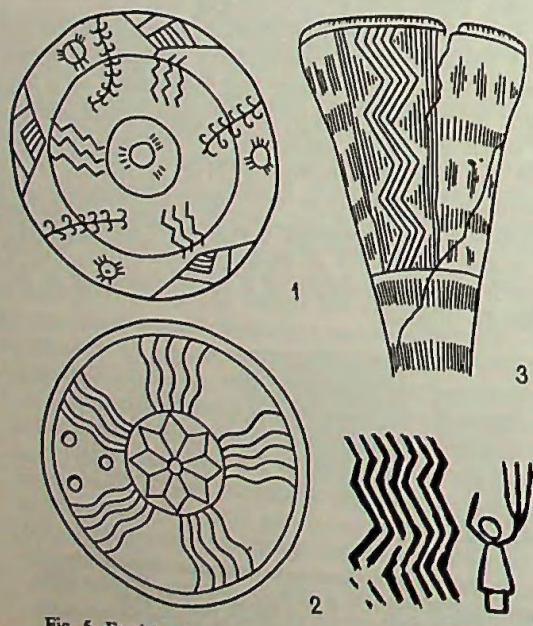


Fig. 5. Fascicle of zigzags — the rain sign: 1 — Czechoslovakia, ca 500 BC [20, p. 32]; 2 — Uzbekistan, ca 700 CE [84, p. 313]; 3 — Iran, ca 3500 BC [612, pl. 13]; 4 — rock wall painting, Urals [577, p. 67].

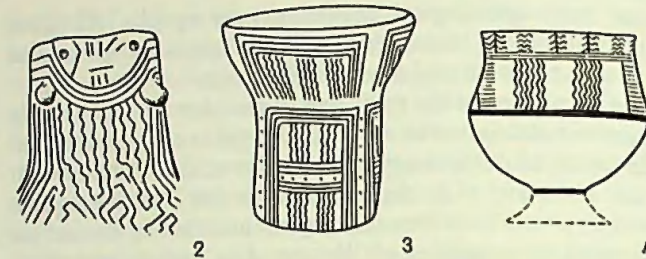


Fig. 6. Rain symbols on Neolithic pottery: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764, p. 236]; 2 — Hungary, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 121]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 118]; 4 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [14, pl. 35].

can see plants rising to the sun (sky?), and bunches of zigzags designating falling rain are drawn from the top downwards. A similar story is conveyed by the ornamentation on an early medieval ceramic dish from Central Asia (Fig. 5: 2); here the rain is shown by wavy-line bunches.

Sometimes the pattern of vertical parallel zigzags is cut off in the upper portion (Fig. 5: 3), creating an impression that what is represented continues beyond the field of vision; most likely, this is falling rain. A rock wall painting in the Urals depicts a scene of praying to a rain-bestowing deity (Fig. 5: 4)⁹; the rain is shown by zigzags.

J. Przyluski in his study on the image of the Great Goddess reflected in ancient literature and art points out that besides her other functions she was considered the goddess of heaven and of heavenly moisture [802, pp. 26, 133]. The ancient appellation for rain was taboo in many languages [108, p. 680]; an explanation for this may lie in that the Great Goddess, the giver of rain and fertility, was at the same time believed to be the source of death, illness, and crop failure, and this led to the notion that it was unwise to attract her attention unduly.

Anthropomorphic vessels of the Neolithic Age, decorated with vertical straight, zigzag, or wavy lines (Fig. 6: 1, 2), represent, as shown by M. Gimbutas [696, pp. 112-123], the image of the heaven goddess who could cause rain to fall; this seems to be the meaning of the decoration as it appears on other Neolithic vessels as well (Fig. 6: 3, 4). The latter conclusion is based not only on the fact that the same ornamental pattern — the vertical zigzag fascicle — is used in both cases. The point is that the object bearing this grapheme, i.e., the vessel, was also semantically associated with rain. The goddess, residing in the sky, was imagined as a receptacle of moisture. Likewise, water storage vessels were associated with the goddess' image. One of the names for this goddess, Kālī, still used in India for the mythical mistress of the world and the local term for "woman" in Georgia (the Caucasus), is consonant with the Nostratic *kala ('vessel, pot') [210a, p. 287]. The notion "vessel" is still associated with femininity in India; the expression "weaker vessel" is used with reference to women. For this reason, vessels in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages were sometimes made like a stylized female figure (Figs. 6: 1, 2; 18: 1; 129: 4). The assumption that the vessels were associated with the goddess' image is also supported by their round mouths (as viewed from above), the circle

⁹The three-fingered hand in this case is a symbol of the heaven goddess; see chapter "The Hand of God" for more detail.

being the symbol of the goddess (this will be discussed below).

The idea of the association between the vessel and the Great Goddess' image, which seems to have originated in Western Asian early farming communities, spread beyond the region. For example, Celtic traditions mention a certain mythical "vessel of the Mother of the World" — the caldron, — which was considered the fertility container; in some East African tribes a blacksmith and a potteress could marry only one another [371b, p. 22] (the divine blacksmith was the goddess' spouse — this will be dealt with in another chapter).

As regards the goddess' name — Kālī — which can be traced to the Neolithic, reminiscences are not confined to India. The Scottish Cailleach — the original Mother of the World, was regarded as a supreme deity by the Scots' ancestors, and therefore their country was called Caledonia by the Romans. The Sumerian Mother Goddess was called Ningal, which might mean "Mistress Kali" (*gal* stands for 'great' in the Sumerian language, but this word might have originated from the name of a more archaic goddess). Callisto was the name of an Arcadian nymph changed into a she-bear; the Great Goddess, as will be shown later, was often pictured as a she-bear.

Ancient representations of the Great Goddess often show her face covered with a veil; *kaliptra* is the Greek for 'veil.' The goddess was the patroness of marriage, hence the Hebrew *kallah* ('bride'). *Kolko* is Basque for 'female bust.' The Nostratic *kōla ('round') may be associated with the name of the goddess Kali [210a, p. 326]. The goddess' accessories included a wreath and a crown; they are called *kelil* in Hebrew.

The Old Russian word *kalika* ('pilgrim singing spiritual songs') may derive from the name of a female deity glorified by wandering priests in their songs. M. Fasmer, author of the *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* [543], believes that the Russian word *kalika* may originate from the Turkic *kalyk* ('people, men'); this etymology seems unlikely from the point of view of semantic logic; at the same time, it is highly probable that the Turkic *kalyk* was derived from the name of the Great Goddess whom we are analyzing, as people were regarded as her children. The Turkic *kel, kol* ('to beg, to pray') also belongs here.

The mythical World Tree will be shown to have been an incarnation of the Great Goddess; hence, probably, the Greek *kalon* ('tree') and also the Greek *skolos*, the Slavic *kol*, the Sanskrit *kilas* ('stake'), the Darghinian (in Daghestan) *ħalmaž* ('pole on a grave'). The male partner of the heaven goddess, the god of the underworld, was pictured as lame; hence, probably, the Armenian *kal* and Russian *koldyga* ('lame').¹⁰ He was the patron of water springs, hence probably the Danish *kilde* and the Swedish *kalla* ('water spring').

The Russian *kolos* and Albanian *kall* ('cereal ear') are perhaps associated with the name of the goddess Kali; cereals will be shown to have been considered the goddess' creation and could have been named after her. There may be an etymological relationship between the Slavic

¹⁰According to the myths of many peoples, a god cast the devil down from heaven, seizing him by the leg, which rendered the devil lame.

kolač ('baked bread') and the pan-Slavic **kolo* ('wheel') [543b, p. 285]; Russian *kulič* ('Easter cake') is believed to be associated with the Greek *kollix* ('round bread') [543b, p. 411]. These parallels may be accounted for not only in terms of the tradition according to which bread was an offspring of the heaven goddess and the earth god, but also by the fact that it was round in shape, the circle being the goddess' symbol. The origin of the Russian idiomatic expression "At the devil's kulichki" (in the back of beyond) may be explained by the phonetic root **k.r+k.l* of a name of the god of the underworld.

The goddess and her spouse, the underworld god, often have similar names; hence, for example, Kalma — the name of the Finnish god of the dead, and Kalunga — the name of the god of death in Angola [730b, p. 905]. The underworld god was represented, in particular, as a serpent; hence Kaliya — the black dragon in Indian myths. The serpent of the underworld was believed to be the source of male fertility; rising to the sky, a fiery serpent (lightning) created rain; in Australia, Kalseru is a mythical serpent, the giver of rain and fecundity [730, p. 904].¹¹

One can hardly expect to come across a sign of the sun on Neolithic pottery,¹² but symbols of rain are abundant. In 8000 to 3000 B.C., when the climate was warmer than it is now, the farmer in Europe as well as in Asia prayed to his god for rain, rather than for the warmth of the sun.

A question arises: why was rain depicted in such a strange manner — by zigzags or wavy lines? Rain jets are straight. The point is that Neolithic art (in which graphic symbolism prevailed) used the method of narration, not of illustration. The wavy or zigzag lines symbolized water,¹³ and in the examples examined they are not the image of rain, but designate heavenly moisture. This is also why rain could be shown by horizontal lines or zigzags as well as by vertical lines (Fig. 9: 9).

Neolithic ideographs include symbols consisting of vertical, wavy, or straight lines issuing from a horizontal band (Fig. 7: 2-4). Such a grapheme designated rain in Ancient Egypt (Fig. 7: 1). The horizontal part of the design in Figure 7: 1 was in Ancient Egypt a hieroglyph meaning 'the sky', which suggests that the horizontal zone in other variants of these graphemes also stands for the sky (in Figure 7: 3 the band with a zigzag designates the sky and moisture within it). Consequently, if the ideograph as a whole designates rain, the more specific meaning is "rain falling from the sky"; at the same time the concrete meaning of the vertical elements is "rain" proper. Zigzags are often the vertical elements in these compositions; therefore they designate rain.

¹¹Owing to the snake's likeness to twisting lightning, the snake was transposed to the heavens by primitive man; lightning was identified with the snake and was therefore considered a thundergod" [606, p. 142]. The Gospel of Luke refers to Satan as "falling from heaven like lightning" (10: 18). The Greeks used the same word for lightning and the serpent. The Adygeian thundergod was named Shible; the second part of the word means 'serpent.'

¹²Signs usually considered representations of the sun had a different semantics during the Neolithic. This will be discussed later.

¹³See chapter "Snake-Water."

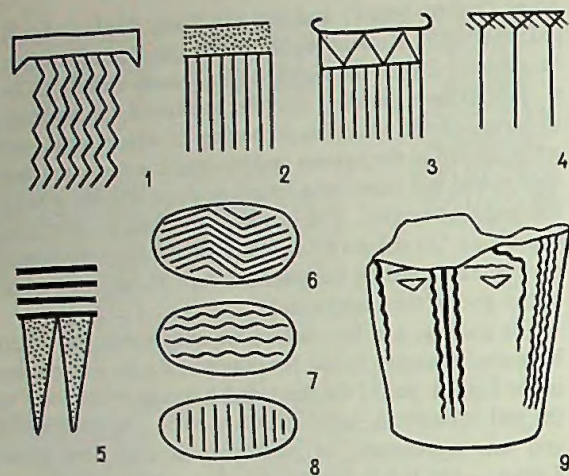


Fig. 7. Rain ideograph: 1 — Ancient Egypt [361, p. 157]; 2—8 — Southeastern Europe, Neolithic [696, p. 115; 632, pl. 10; 765, p. 163]; 9 — Greece, ca 2500 BC [696, p. 114].

Schematically, this ideograph acquired the shape of a comb. The Neolithic pottery of Southeastern Europe was sometimes decorated with pictures of snakes complete with comb signs (Fig. 124: 6), i.e., with the symbol of rain. (The combination of a snake image and a comb sign is due to the fact that snakes were associated with water, more specifically rain, in ancient mythology, remnants of which notions were preserved in popular beliefs until the twentieth century; the goddess was the mistress of heavenly water, whereas her male partner, rising into the sky as a fiery serpent, created thunderstorms; besides, his association with the water element was expressed through his relationship with earthly water bodies — seas, rivers, springs, lakes, and bogs¹⁴).

The shape of a comb resembles the sign of rain, so that the comb came to be perceived as a rain symbol. In some myths forests grow from a comb [371b, p. 50] because rain favors vegetation. The wife of the Japanese thundergod was called Kusunado-Khime; the word *kusi*¹⁵ meaning 'comb' is a component of the name [371b, p. 31].

Signs in the form of a comb or resembling bunches of zigzags are not just designations of rain, but are sacred symbols expressing requests to a deity or illustrating the deity's functions. There are numerous ancient and medieval combs whose appearance makes one wonder whether such objects could really be meant for utilitarian purposes; these are indubitably cult objects.

Archeological monuments from prehistoric Egypt include symbolic combs crowned with bird or ring images [795, p. 36] (the bird and the ring will be shown to have been heaven symbols). In Kurdistan, tombstones of buried males have comb images on them, and Kurd men wear combs under their hats [716, p. 81] (beliefs underwent a change in the Bronze Age, and a male heavenly deity became the giver of rain¹⁶). We will repeatedly come across this

¹⁴See chapter "Snake-Water" for more detail.

¹⁵This word is consonant with numerous mythological names and words from different languages, which have the root *k.s* and must be considered related, proceeding from their mythologized semantics (see chapter "The Black God").

¹⁶See chapter "The Great Goddess" for more detail.

phenomenon: an object acquires significance as a sacred symbol because it resembles a certain conventional design (a typical example: the ram came to be revered as a sacred animal because its horns resembled a spiral-shaped graphic sign; this will be discussed later).

Figures 7: 6-8 show earthenware stamps used for marking loaves of bread during baking. The patterns on these stamps would thus be graphically expressed supplicatory prayers for rain (or moisture in general) needed to ensure good crops. It follows from a comparison between these designs that rain (or moisture in general) could be depicted not only as zigzags or wavy lines, but also as a series of parallel straight lines; the same can be seen from a comparison between the designs in Figure 7: 1-4.

It was pointed out above that rain in the beliefs of Neolithic farmers in Europe and Western Asia was considered a gift of the heaven goddess. The figurative thinking of ancient people pictured the goddess' hair as rain jets (Figs. 7: 9; 8: 6). This resemblance could have come to mind because the wavy hair typical of southern-type women resembled the symbol of rain — the wavy lines.

Hair being a typical attribute of the goddess, ancient figurines of priestesses found in Mediterranean countries depict women with long loose hair. In the cult of the goddess, which survived in Asia Minor until Classical Antiquity, "priests and priestesses sacrificed their locks to the goddess, pulling them out ecstatically during fiery dances" [834, p. 237]. Ritual sacrifice of hair was probably behind the custom of head shaving by priests (as in Ancient Egypt or India); a rudiment of this custom remained in Catholicism (a round-shaped tonsure was produced, the circle resembling the heaven goddess' symbol). Catholic priests' tonsure is a heritage of the ancient pagan custom; this can be seen from the Bible's note on Jewish priests: "They shall not make baldness upon their heads" (Leviticus 21: 5). The custom of cutting a child's hair on its first birthday meant a sacrifice in the distant past. The ancient conceptions of association between hair and comb, on the one hand, and rain, on the other, were still alive in the Middle Ages: it was sufficient to inform the Inquisition of a suspicious woman who combed her hair before it started raining (which meant that she induced rain) to have the woman put to death by burning — as a witch. In ancient times women offered their hair as a sacrifice to the goddess, so that she might bless them with a child. Women used their finely pulverized hair for aphrodisiac purposes by mixing it into a man's drink.

Ancient myths and rites, as well as archeological evidence, attest to an association of the goddess' image with the burial cult and with the notion of the next world (J. Przyluski notes that she was the "patroness of the dead" and explains by this the rite of burying in pitchers [802, pp. 122, 126]). The Great Goddess, the mistress of heaven and all nature, was considered to be the source, the original cause, of death, as well as of life. Women at funerals loosened their hair in order to look like the goddess whose hair was rain; hence the old custom of letting one's hair down while in mourning. The Kets¹⁷ used to cover a dead

¹⁷The Kets are a small Siberian ethnic group, about one thousand persons, inhabiting the Yenisei River basin. The Kets still maintain rudiments of some archaic cultural characteristics. Their language belongs to the Sino-Caucasian macrofamily.

woman's face with her loose hair [153, p. 103], which may mean an intention to identify the deceased, the one who "went to the goddess," with the goddess' image.

The Abkhassians had a tradition according to which the hair of forest nymphs brought wealth to those who possessed it [10, p. 27]. This tradition originated in the image of the nymph's prototype, the Great Goddess, whose spouse, the god of the underground kingdom, owned countless riches. Yet another belief shared by different peoples has the same source: a hairy person is fated to become wealthy. Hair was generally associated not only with the heaven goddess (representing rain in this case), but also with the earth god (here an analogue of earthly vegetation). The earth god was considered the patron of manhood and of manly vigor; hence the myth of Samson who lost his power when his hair was cut.

The earth god was also believed to be responsible for misfortunes befalling people; this gave rise to a popular belief that hair is fraught with a certain danger; a Hittite text relates that when a hair was found in a royal drinking vessel, the water-carrier was put to death [29, p. 119]. Vague rudiments of the archaic notion that there is something hazardous about people's hair or that hair is associated with something "impure" still exist among Jews: it is necessary to wash one's hands after hair cutting or washing, and it is forbidden to touch one's hair while eating. It will be shown later that names for the underworld god had roots which comprised the consonants *h.r*, *s.r*, *k.r*, *k.r.t*; hence, probably, the words meaning 'hair' in different languages: the English *hair*, the Hebrew *se'ar*, the Latin *crinis*, the Vainakhian¹⁸ *korta*.

Associated with the sacred-symbolic significance attached to head hair are the customs of concealing one's hair or, conversely, leaving it uncovered; Russian fairy tales, for example, use both these motifs. In former days, married women in Russia were not to appear bareheaded; it was disreputable for a woman to let people see her hair loose. Women in medieval Europe did not remove their headdress not only in public, but even at home. Observant Jewesses cover their heads with kerchiefs. In Daghestan, especially in out-of-the-way mountain villages, women avoid uncovering their hair even in front of their husbands. Male Europeans and Caucasians, on the other hand, bare their heads as a sign of respect. The requirement, typical of the Christian religion, of taking one's hat off while praying or on entering a church existed among inhabitants of the mountainous Caucasus during the period of paganism (which in some places persisted until the middle of the nineteenth century). Hair being associated with the deity, yet another concept emerged: it is improper to show one's hair while addressing a deity; hence the ancient Hebrew custom of covering the heads on entering the Temple and while praying or reading the Holy Book; Christian priests, too, cover their heads. Christian Copts also pray with their heads covered.

Other image-bearing notions of rain's nature existed, in addition to the association between rain and loose hair. A. Afanasiev, a nineteenth century Russian mythologist, wrote: "The primeval Aryan tribesmen called rain heavenly

¹⁸Vainakh (or Nakh) is the ethnonym of the Chechenes and Ingushes.



Fig. 8. Rain — the goddess' tears, Neolithic: 1 — Asia Minor [764b, p. 510]; 2 — France [381a, p. 221]; 3, 4 — Greece [696, p. 114]; 5 — Ancient Egypt, the eye of the heavenly cow Hathor; 6 — Northern Mesopotamia [701, fig. 42]; 7, 8 — Portugal [820, p. 161].

milk; in rainclouds they imagined milch cow's udders or nursing mother's breasts... Female breasts, containing milk, and rainclouds have identical names in Sanskrit" [40c, p. 117]. An association between rain and milk is also suggested by the following custom: in Ossetia, during droughts a cup of milk was brought to a sanctuary, and the walls were sprinkled with it. Kabardinians were accustomed to pour milk at a site struck by lightning [604, p. 70].

Finally, rain is pictured as the heaven goddess' tears. There is a Lithuanian expression: "Princess Karalune is weeping," meaning "it is raining" [778a, p. 85]. Neolithic female idols are known with zigzag or straight lines drawn under their eyes (Figs. 8: 1, 4, 6; 18: 1).¹⁹ A pagan shrine in mountainous Ingushetia had a female idol; under its eyes, people say, there were tears [135, p. 101].

In some cases the sign "rain-tears" under the goddess' eyes consists of horizontal strokes (Fig. 8: 2, 7). Parallel lines were the ideograph of rain or water, and it did not matter whether the lines were vertical or horizontal.

¹⁹Vertical sheaves of zigzags under the eyes are also encountered in pre-Columbian artifacts (Fig. 317: 3). Common sense refuses to see chance coincidence in this, or the effect of similar conditions of life, especially in the light of quite a few similarities in the symbolism of the Old and New Worlds.



Fig. 9. Neolithic designs of clouds and rain: 1 — Prussia [840, pl. 78]; 2, 3 — Southeastern Europe [696, p. 115]; 4 — Ukraine [468b, p. 27]; 5 — design on stone masonry, Daghestan, Tidib; 6—9 — Northern Mesopotamia [701, figs. 26, 27, 101, 28].

Zigzags and waves designating both moisture contained in clouds and rain falling from them could also be drawn horizontally (Fig. 9: 7-9). Rain could be designated under the eyes of a female idol by the comb symbol (Figs. 8: 8; 129: 4). In all these and in other cases rain was not depicted, but rather marked by means of conventional signs.

Neolithic pottery in Europe frequently exhibits designs consisting of combinations of vertical lines and semiovals (Fig. 9: 1, 2, 4); the latter are obviously rain clouds. B. Rybakov and M. Gimbutas showed in their works [478; 696] analyzing ancient symbols that this is the significance of such graphemes. Semiovals are usually encircled by several concentric arcs which must be a conventional way of showing cloud shapes.

Ancient graphic symbols are characterized by the transformation of straight lines into broken ones. Consequently, the zigzag and the wave are graphic variations of the same sign. Sometimes rectangular-broken lines were used instead of triangular-zigzag ones (Figs. 10: 9; 102: 3, 4), both having the same meaning of "water, rain."

We will later come across examples of semiovals turning into angular brackets (Figs. 19, 54). It seems likely that the combination of brackets and zigzags on the Daghestan carved stone shown in Figure 2: 2 derives from the ideo-

graph "clouds and rain"; though in the given case this cannot be positively asserted, because the brackets and zigzags in the pattern are disconnected.

More commonly, semiovals designating rain clouds became transformed into triangles (Fig. 9: 5, 6).²⁰ The triangle as a sign of rain cloud was a common symbol in ancient times; it was even used by American Indians [673b, Table 329]. Sometimes triangles were used for designating rain proper (Figs. 7: 5; 8: 3; 9: 3).

Taking the above examples into account one can clearly see the meaning of the series of symbols such as that in Figure 10. These graphemes are different ways of depicting clouds with rain pouring from them. Some of these designs, in particular those consisting of arcs and radial lines (Fig. 10: 1, 3, 6), may create the impression that what is shown is the half-sun and rays. However, other indisputably related designs are testimony to the invalidity of such an interpretation. For example, vertical rather than radial lines may be adjacent to the arcs (Fig. 10: 8). In accordance with the model of transforming curved lines into broken ones, a cloud may be designated by a triangle (Fig. 10: 2, 7, 9) or by a paddle shape (Fig. 10: 4; it is possible that in this case the transformation was prompted by the vision of a female breast shape in the



Fig. 10. Semiovals, blades, and triangles with dashes: 1 — France, ca 3000 BC [719, p. 203]; 2 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC [431, p. 62]; 3 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 95]; 4 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 203]; 5, 9 — pre-Columbian America [234, p. 171; 823, p. 152]; 6 — Karelia, ca 3000 BC [443, pl. 21]; 7 — Elam, ca 3000 BC [798, p. 35]; 8 — Asia Minor, ca 100 BC [618i, pl. 54].

²⁰B. Goff, who published some examples of such designs from Northern Mesopotamia, saw no more in them than a mere "combination of triangles and lines" [701, p. 3].

rain cloud). The sign of the cloud in the form of concentric arcs became transformed into a triangle with a herringbone shape (Figs. 11: 7; 13: 4). Adjacent to the triangle-clouds are also strokes (including vertical ones) designating rain (Fig. 10: 2, 7). Signs of moisture contained in the cloud may be incorporated in the cloud design (Fig. 10: 4), alongside symbolic representation of fields under crops irrigated by heavenly moisture (Fig. 10: 1), or of plants (Fig. 10: 7).

Figure 10: 2 shows an interesting design consisting of two raincloud signs. Early farmers regarded the heaven goddess as the bestower of rain, which resulted in the conversion of the cloud sign into a symbol of the goddess (for this reason her figure could be likened to a triangle — see Fig. 146: 6). The goddess symbols were in many cases doubled (such examples will be referred to repeatedly); in all probability, a triangle inscribed into another triangle is a double symbol of the goddess. A similar sign was used in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 10: 9). Characteristically, the vessel shown in Figure 10: 9 was intended for ritual purposes; it was used in praying for rain [823, p. 152]. Another variant of the double goddess symbol is a bow-shaped design consisting of two triangles. The range of such signs under the cloud signs on the vessel in question seems to symbolize the "upper sky", the goddess' sphere.

Quite frequently the rain sign is put inside the cloud sign instead of below it (Fig. 11: 1, 2). This would be an idea not just of a cloud in the sky, but of a rain cloud comprising moisture which is expected to descend to the ground. As the design underwent simplification, the semiovals turned into triangles and rain jets were shown by hatching (Fig. 11: 3-5). Note, that the motif of triangles with shading was conceived in ancient Eurasian art prior to



Fig. 11. Rain clouds pictured on pottery: 1 — Ukraine, ca 3000 BC [413, p. 209]; 2—5 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764, pp. 371, 425, 413, 434]; 6 — Azerbaijan, ca 2500 BC [13, p. 119]; 7 — Western Siberia, ca 1000 BC [594, p. 37]; 8 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, p. 74].



Fig. 12. Semiovals containing dots: 1—3, 5 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, pp. 431, 427, 383, 416]; 4 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC [515, p. 25].



Fig. 13. Semiovals with perimeter dots: 1 — Aegean Greece, ca 1200 BC [248, fig. 68]; 2 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 73]; 3, 4 — Ukraine, 3000—1000 BC [431, p. 81; 29, p. 40].

the Neolithic [871, Table 1]. Even that far back it could have the significance of a cloud sign and could therefore be the heaven goddess symbol. The design consisting of an arc with adjacent lines was in existence as early as the Paleolithic (Fig. 10: 3); it is possible that even then it was already the symbol meaning "cloud and rain."

In the Neolithic and later, during the Bronze Age, little circles or dots were sometimes placed next to the sequence of triangles (Fig. 11: 6-8); circles or dots sometimes located inside the cloud sign (Figs. 10: 1; 12) or around its circumference (Fig. 13). It would hardly be mistaken to qualify these circles and dots as designating grain which needs to be watered. Likewise, circles designating grain may be adjacent to the dashes designating rain (Fig. 24: 5).

The request to the heaven goddess to promote the growth of crops could also be expressed in a different way. Neolithic

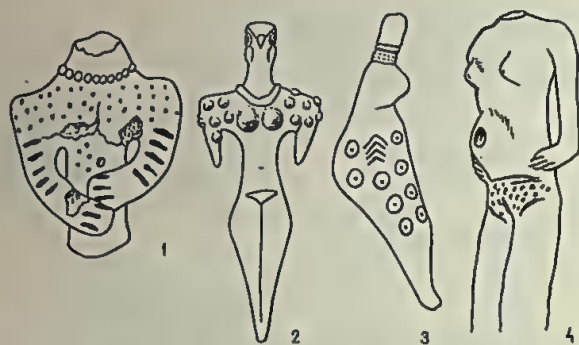


Fig. 14. Aeneolithic female figurines: 1-3 — Mesopotamia and Southern Turkmenia [26, pl. 42, 63, 62]; 4 — Palestine [837, plates].

female figurines often carry circles, dots, or circles with dots inside, or little pasted pieces of material (Fig. 14), which may have the same meaning as natural cereal grains impressed on the clay bodies of similar figurines, i.e., they express a prayer to the goddess to ensure a rich harvest. In the Neolithic, natural grains were sometimes pressed into the surface of earthenware during its manufacture; this produced an ornament later made by means of dotted depressions. Figure 14: 4 shows a female figurine in which the lower abdomen is covered with dotted depressions; this detail expresses an appeal to the goddess to contribute to the growth of crops.

A combination of the cloud sign with one designating a grain (a dot) or a swollen grain (a circle or a dot within a circle) is a clear prayer for bringing heavenly moisture and the cultivated field together. Such designs express an idea similar to that in ornamentations on vessels from Tripolye,²¹ despite a certain difference in the arrangement. This is the "idea of a seed and the idea of water coming to the seed from the sky" [468a, p. 39].

Pottery from Asia Minor, dating from the early farming period, sometimes has serrated designs inscribed in semiovals (Fig. 15: 1-3), occasionally in combination with a circle or a dot (Fig. 12: 2-3). B. Rybakov, discussing the picture

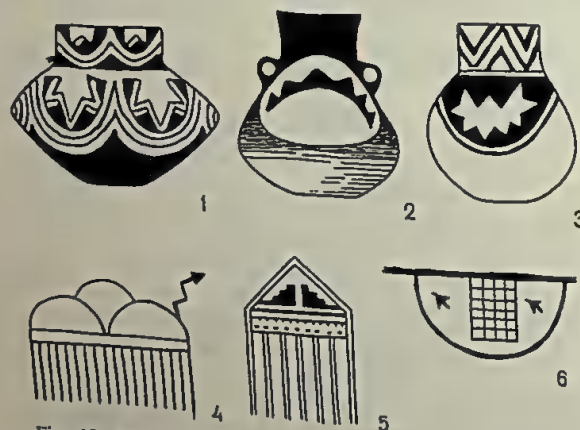


Fig. 15. Rain clouds watering the earth: 1-3 — Asia Minor, 6000-4000 BC [764, pp. 419, 349, 279]; 4, 5 — North American Indian [843, p. 138]; 6 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [798, p. 29].

²¹ The Tripolye or Cucuteni culture dates from the fourth to third millennia B.C.; it existed on the territory west of the Dnieper in the Ukraine, Moldavia, and northern Rumania.

shown in Figure 9: 4, writes: "The ground covered with triangles must be a graphic representation of tilled soil" [468b, p. 26]. Let us suggest that in the examples shown in Figure 15: 1-3, these serrations are also a conventional designation of tilled soil; this hypothesis is corroborated by numerous examples which will be given in later chapters. In particular, this would be the meaning of the shaded triangles in Figure 10: 9, placed next to the cloud sign. The ideograph composed of signs of the cloud, plowed soil, and sprouting seed should be interpreted as a supplicatory prayer to the heaven goddess to bestow rain needed for the crops.

The same meaning is conveyed by the ideograph in Figure 15: 6. The cultivated land here is designated by a lattice-like symbol which is a conventional representation of a field divided into plots,²² and the two accompanying elements are signs of vegetation.

The comb design with semiovals is the same ideograph meaning "cloud and rain" as used by American Indians (Fig. 15: 4). The zigzag terminating with an arrowhead near the semiovals is the "fiery serpent" known to represent lightning in myths; snakes with arrow-shaped heads were also a motif in the ancient art of Eurasia (this will be discussed later).

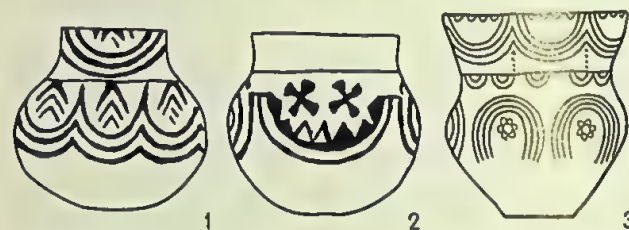


Fig. 16. Rain clouds watering vegetation: 1, 2 — Asia Minor, 6000-4000 BC [764a, p. 61; 764b, p. 279]; 3 — Rumania, ca 3500 BC [699, p. 104].

In Figure 15: 5 a triangle, rather than a semioval, is the cloud sign. The composition contains a series of dots, implying an area under grain crops. Stepped figures similar to those commonly encountered on Western Asian Neolithic pottery can be seen inside the triangles; they seem to have the same meaning as the serrations in Figure 15: 1-3, i.e., they symbolize cultivated land.

Thus, symbols of objects in need of rain could be marked inside the symbol of the cloud containing the desired rain. Neolithic pottery is sometimes decorated with semioval designs comprising conventionalized images of cereal ears or of flowers (Fig. 16). All these are graphic expressions of the farmer's prayers for rain.

In some cases the cloud sign is inverted (Figs. 16: 3; 17: 2, 8, 10). The particular position of the sign does not have any semantic implication. However, the combination of semiovals facing in different directions (Fig. 17: 1) must have had special meaning; this may be a variant of the doubled goddess symbol.

An ancient Egyptian picture (Fig. 17: 10) exhibits a sign composed of concentric semiovals in combination with a swallow image; the swallow was a symbol of Isis, an

²² The sign of a lattice or net could also be a sky symbol; see chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."



Fig. 17. Semioval — sign of rain cloud: 1 — Germany, Neolithic [719, p. 295]; 2 — France, Neolithic [648, p. 313]; 3 — Crete, ca 1500 BC [676a, p. 245]; 4 — Switzerland, ca 2500 BC [381a, p. 250]; 5 — Northern Mesopotamia, Neolithic [701, fig. 19]; 6 — France, ca 3000 BC [719, p. 222]; 7 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 2000 BC [431, p. 115]; 8 — Yugoslavia, Neolithic [381a, p. 223]; 9 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 3000 BC [413, p. 143]; 10 — Ancient Egypt [639, p. 92].

ancient Oriental goddess originating from the Neolithic Great Goddess. We can see that the concentric semiovals are in fact associated with the goddess believed to be the bestower of rain in Neolithic times.

Let us compare the diagrams in Figure 17: 5, 6 made during the Neolithic in the territories of present France and Northern Mesopotamia. The designs in both cases consist of concentric semiovals; in the former case the semiovals are combined with a dot designating seed, in the latter — with zigzags known to be water signs. Here, too, we have a conventional designation of a rain cloud — the goddess symbol widely used and constituting a stable component in various designs. The same motif continued in use later, during the Bronze Age (Fig. 17: 7), however, it is hard to say whether it still retained its initial semantics.

M. Ryndin, an artist who studied Kazakhstan ornaments, believed that the semiovals formed by concentric lines are patterns of fingerprints [477, Table 15]. The same idea was advanced earlier by the archeologist A. Maître in connection with designs on stones of ancient tombs in France [757, p. 333]. But this only means that such dia-

grams sometimes resemble fingerprints; if a certain ancient nonfigurative motif looks like something, this does not generally offer a clue to its meaning. The archeologists A. Miller [361, p. 154] and V. Ravdonikas [444, p. 20], following the American scholar F. Cushing [655, pp. 516, 517], thought that the concentric-arcs design meant the rainbow; this judgement, however, is also based on an external resemblance of forms and is not supported by the context in which the sign was used.

Neolithic idols and grave stelae frequently exhibit necklace representations made up of concentric arcs (Fig. 18). This design is emphasized, being one of the few, sometimes the only, graphic element of the statue; hence, it was regarded as a significant element in the whole composition. The reason is not that the necklace was a woman's adornment.

In some cases the resemblance of this element to a necklace is not great, but it is undoubtedly a variant of the cloud symbol (cf. Figs. 18: 2 and 10: 4; 18: 3 and 12: 4; 18: 5 and 17: 5). In Figures 18: 6 and 8: 7 it is a way of representing this symbol, intermediate between concentric semiovals and herringbones. In other cases female idols' chests are decorated with pendants shaped like rain-cloud symbols, rather than necklaces (Figs. 18: 1, 4; 348: 2; 364: 2). A comparison of all these images suggests that Neolithic early farmers saw in the necklace a symbol of the raincloud and for that reason it had for them the significance of the heaven goddess' emblem. This is another example of how an object resembling a graphic symbol acquired the significance of that symbol.

Thus, a sign made up of semiovals (usually concentric, though sometimes single) designated a raincloud in Neolithic times. It is possible that arcs, brackets, and semicir-

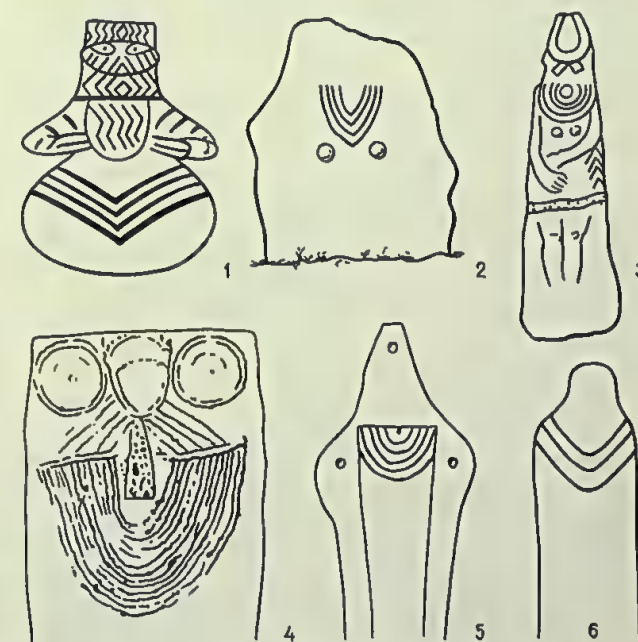


Fig. 18. Cloud symbol on idols: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, p. 525]; 2 — France, ca 3000 BC [719, p. 217]; 3 — Greece, ca 2500 [782c, pl. 403]; 4 — Northern Italy, ca 2000 BC [620, p. 83]; 5 — Spain, ca 3000 BC [654, p. 65]; 6 — Northern Caucasus, ca 1800 BC [581, p. 114].



Fig. 19. Semiovals and brackets in Northern Caucasus: 1 — incised stones in masonry, Daghestan; 2 — medieval stela, Chechnia [320, p. 119]; 3 — doorway decoration of a medieval structure, Chechnia [321, p. 112]; 4, 5 — signs on stones, Chechnia [326, p. 47; 395, fig. 83]; 6 — fragment of an old Ossetian utensil (museum in Ordzhonikidze).

cles in archaic ornaments of the Northern Caucasus meant the same (Fig. 19). Ossetian and Cretan objects (Figs. 17: 3 and 19: 6), vastly separated in time and space, look strikingly alike.

Neolithic pottery from Asia Minor has symbols of vegetation, cereals, and tilled soil not only within semiovals, but also within various types of ovals: truncated, irregular in outline, or drawn concentrically (Figs. 15: 2; 20: 1, 2); sometimes there is a small circle (a seed sign), or a tendril (a plant sign) next to concentric circles (Fig. 20: 3). All this suggests that full or incomplete concentric circles (Fig. 20: 4, 5) were also a cloud symbol.

Incidentally, in Ancient China a sign formed of concentric circles was a hieroglyph for 'cloud'. Chinese materials generally contribute little to our understanding of ancient cult symbols discovered in Europe and Western Asia; nevertheless, some of the symbols (and myths) spread from the Mediterranean as far as Eastern or Southeastern Asia and even Oceania. The concentric-circles sign, common in the oldest cultures of the Old World, was also known in pre-Columbian America [702, pp. 101, 103, 121].

This grapheme sometimes developed into a spiral (Fig. 20: 6). Spirals in ancient symbolism often designated snakes (Fig. 98), but this was not always their meaning.

In some contexts concentric circles and the spiral read alike. H. Sicard adduced numerous examples to show the semantic identity of these two signs [835]; but it would be unreasonable to accept his opinion (which is not substantiated) that these signs symbolized immortality — "the triumph of life which flourishes over and over again."

The transition from concentric circles to the spiral must have occurred on a graphic basis: spirals are easier to draw by hand, without compasses, than concentric circles (Figs. 48: 2; 292: 11; 306: 1, 2). Present-day draftsmen, too, employ this technique when they use spiral diagrams to depict annual rings on trees.

The mistress of rain was the heaven goddess, and therefore the cloud sign consisting of concentric circles, being an emblem of the goddess, acquired the connotative meaning of 'heaven'. The concentric-circles heaven symbol probably lies behind the conception that the sky has several "circles," or tiers.

But how did the semioval designating cloud become an oval or a circle?

Upper Paleolithic objects shaped like disks and made from bone or stone are found on the territory extending from the Pyrenees to Lake Baikal [836]. They sometimes exhibit engravings of animal images or of chimerical beings; yet in most cases these engravings are abstract patterns, quite likely of symbolic significance (Fig. 21); some of the disks are fretwork (Fig. 325: 11, 12); others are plain, without images. The majority have an aperture or a hollow in the center. These are clearly cult objects; some ten or twelve thousand years later similar cult objects were

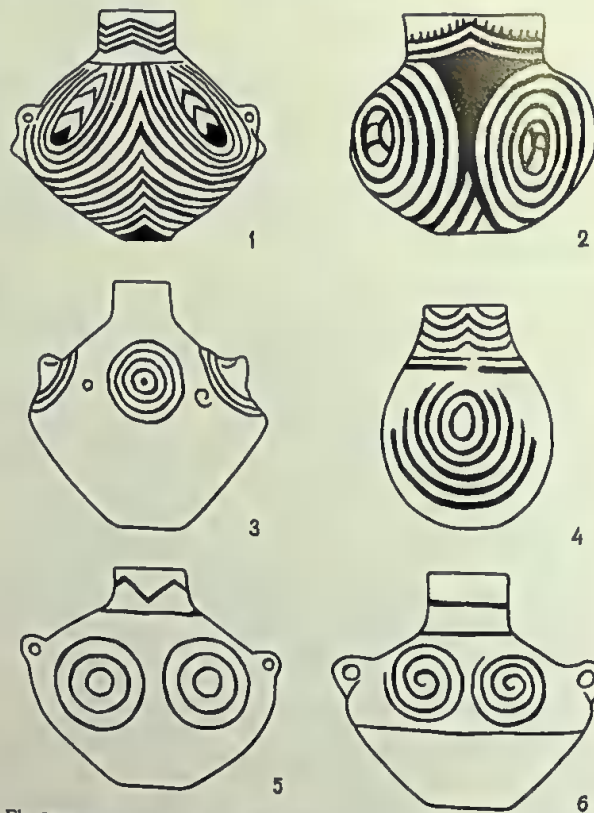


Fig. 20. Concentric circles — sign of cloud: 1—6 — pottery, 6000—4000 BC, Asia Minor [764a, pp. 59, 61; 764b, p. 349, 419, 423].

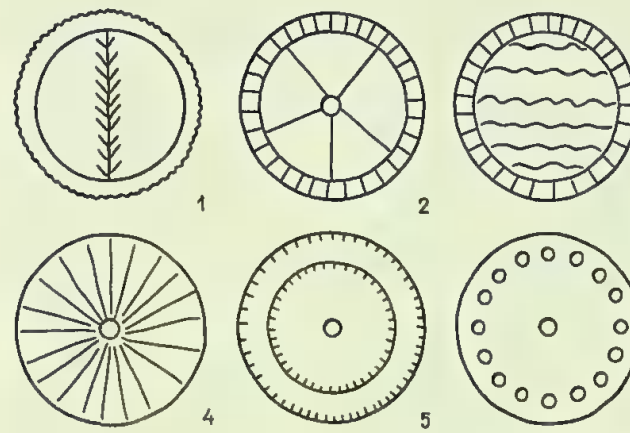


Fig. 21. Paleolithic disks: 1—6 — Western Europe, 20,000—10,000 BC [836, pl. 76-80].

common in the Caucasus (these were disks with an aperture or a hollow at the center, the difference being that they were made of bronze [537, Table 55]).

In an interesting article dealing with the semantics of certain Paleolithic symbols, M. König showed that during the Upper Paleolithic period a symbol existed in the form of a circle designating heaven, with a dot in the center, believed to represent the hub or "eye" of heaven [733, pp. 146-154]. This is probably the meaning of the Paleolithic disks.

The conclusion can be drawn from the above that the semioval did not change into the oval/circle, but that the two figures were symbols with related meanings as far back as the Paleolithic: the former meant the cloud, the latter the sky, and both were the heaven goddess' emblems.

The semioval figures formed by concentric arcs designating the cloud and serving as symbols of the heaven goddess, interacted with the symbol of the sky represented by a disk, and this produced the symbol of the cloud and heaven in the form of concentric circles. This design inherited the dot in the center of the disk, which later, during the Neolithic, came to symbolize the seed watered by heavenly moisture. The appearance of the heaven symbol during the Neolithic in the form of several concentric circles matching concentric arcs (a sign of the cloud), was encouraged by the fact that the symbol of heaven in the form of two concentric circles was already in existence during the Paleolithic (Fig. 21: 5).

The semantic identity of the oval and semioval is further confirmed by designs of similar content, which incorporate these signs (Fig. 22).

The emergence of the symbol of concentric circles was due not only to the common semantic basis of the disk and concentric semiovals, i.e. 'heaven,' but primarily to the fact that in both cases the concept of heaven was associated



Fig. 22. Oval or semioval containing dot: 1, 2 — rock wall paintings, Northern Italy, ca 3000 BC [619, p. 94].

with the image of the same deity; the two signs (i.e., the semioval — the conventional designation of the cloud, and the disk — the conventional designation of heaven) were emblems of the goddess.

M. König mentions in his article a Paleolithic image of a woman whose belly is shaped as a disk with a dot in the center. Figure 14: 4 shows an Aeneolithic figurine portraying in a far from naturalistic manner a pregnant woman: her belly has the shape of a regular hemisphere with a large opening in the center. A comparison of these two images indicates that: 1) the image of the Neolithic goddess was inherited from the Paleolithic; 2) the circular shape was associated with that goddess; the dot in the center of the circle could signify the opening through which the goddess was impregnated (there is no need to prove that mythological thinking did not necessarily picture supernatural processes as similar to natural ones).

Thus, we can see from a number of examples that the disk or circle was the symbol of the sky in the Paleolithic and Neolithic times. This conception survived during following epochs, although the specific meaning of the circle symbol was forgotten. Numerous facts will be adduced to confirm the assumption that the circle symbolized heaven.



Fig. 23. Symbolic rings: 1, 2 — France, Bronze Age [659b, p. 303]; 3 — Armenia, 19th c. [844, p. 147]; 4 — Ancient Crete [865, p. 75]; 5 — Ancient Egypt [347, p. 23]; 6, 7 — Armenia, Bronze Age [170, p. 150]; 8 — ancient symbol of planet Venus.

Bronze Age artifacts include various ring-shaped cult objects (Fig. 23) whose meaning has so far remained obscure. It is now clear that they are heaven symbols; in particular, the double ring (Fig. 23: 7) can be interpreted as a variant of the doubled symbols of the goddess.

The ring was one of the few abstract cult symbols in Ancient Egypt and in Sumer. This symbol is often taken

for a solar sign, though it is not explained why the sun should be shown as a ring. It is much more reasonable to see in the ring (as well as the disk until the Bronze Age) a heaven symbol. In India there was a ritual of turning a ring around one's finger [858, p. 11], which must have symbolized the rotation of the sky (that the sky revolved round the North Star did not escape the attention of ancient people who looked on the sky as a habitation or incarnation of the deity). Neither is the combination of ring and finger accidental, for, as will be shown later, the finger was an analogue of the phallus, an attribute of the goddess' spouse, which was typical of ancient cult conceptions (hence the custom of putting a ring on the finger during the marriage ceremony; the ring and the finger are allegories of the vulva and phallus).

Ancient monuments and popular rites furnish numerous examples of the symbolic significance attached to the ring. From Russia to Spain, young girls twine wreaths and cast them into water during summer festivals rooted in pagan rites. The wreath used to be a cult accessory of both males and females of all age groups; it sometimes even played the same role in Christianity (for example, pilgrims placed wreaths on their heads when embarking on expeditions to holy places). The present custom of bringing wreaths to a deceased clearly goes back to the time when the wreath was the symbol of the goddess responsible for both births and deaths (Jews do not accept this custom because its symbolic meaning was still known when the Judaic religion was in the making). In the Caucasus, circles were made out of twigs to ensure reproduction of livestock; the bronze ring was a sacred object used during oath taking and in incantations against illness.

Ancient representations of the investiture scene are known, in which a woman is depicted handing a ring to a man. The woman is the by then almost forgotten heaven goddess, the ring is her symbol, and she presents it as an attestation of power and dignity. In medieval Europe, nomination to church posts or ordainment to priesthood were accompanied by the presentation of a symbolic ring. The priests of many peoples used to wear a ring as a symbol of dignity. A royal ring transmitted to another person implied transfer of power. Peruvian Incas ennobled their tribesmen by fixing a ring in the ear. The wedding ring, the symbolic head-ring of the marriage ceremony or a coronation crown, the wreath presented to the winner in sports events — all these are symbols of the heaven goddess, the Great Goddess of the pre-Indo-European epoch.

Words meaning 'ring' and 'nature' have the same root in Hebrew; this is probably because the Great Goddess symbolized by the ring was regarded as the protectress and incarnation of living nature. The Hebrew *hag* ('religious holiday'; this word originally meant 'round dance') and *hug* ('circle') are from the same root; the word *haga* ('fear, terror') seems to belong here, too, as the Great Goddess (like the underworld god) was considered a ruthless being inflicting misfortune (hence probably the Daghestanian saying, "Rain forebodes misfortune").

Ritual shooting from bows with disks as targets²³ and piercing wreaths or other rings with spears [829b, p. 169] were practised in medieval Europe. L. Schroeder, who

interpreted these data from the viewpoint of the universal "sun cult," writes: "The disk is undoubtedly a solar symbol." But why undoubtedly? In the given case this is dubious. Does it make sense to shoot at the sacred symbol, to pierce it with a spear, especially when it is a symbol of the sun? There is a mythopoetic motif about a spear which pierces the vault of the sky. If the disk or the ring are heaven symbols, the custom is understandable: the spear or the arrow, as will be shown being phallic symbols, represented the male deity; the goddess, engaging in intercourse with him, gives birth to all living being on earth. The ring in this case was associated with the goddess' sex organ; this is confirmed by some of the goddess' images (Fig. 351: 2). Similar to the European rite of piercing the ring with a spear, the Avars (in Daghestan) used to hang a circular-shaped loaf of bread round the neck of the winning horse during horse races.²⁴ Scholars are convinced that this bread was a solar symbol [370, p. 29].

The rite of piercing the ring with a spear, as well as other rites of a sexual nature, was intended to promote the birth of offspring, the breeding of cattle and of wild animals for the hunt, and to ensure better crops. In this rite, which developed into various games, a girl presents a white kerchief to the winner (the white cloth is a symbol of the goddess²⁵); after the games are over, the participants perform a dance.²⁶

In considering the rite of piercing the ring/disk with a spear or arrow, in which the ring/disk is an analogue of the vulva, let us take into account the circumstance that animal images in Upper Paleolithic art were sometimes accompanied first by the vulva image and later by an oval or a circular sign. We have here a replacement of an emblem of the goddess (a sexual organ) with another emblem (the ring — heaven), rather than with a graphic transformation of the vulva shape. The usual interpretation of such images should also be revised: this is not the ancient hunter's concern about animal breeding, but the idea of the relationship between the mythologized animal and the goddess.

The circle/heaven has the same symbolic meaning as the semicircle/cloud, and thus the dots around the semicircle (Fig. 13) and the dots along the circumference of the circle (Fig. 23: 4) must have the same meaning, namely, they designate seed watered by the dew of heaven. If this assumption is valid, it applies primarily to the symbolism

²³ The modern shooting target in the form of a disk with concentric circles is obviously an ancient symbol of the sky, used as a target in ritual shooting. The coincidence of the German *Ziel* ('goal, target') and the French *ciel* ('sky') is not accidental: these words, as one can see, are semantically related.

²⁴ The horse was believed to represent the spouse of the Great Goddess. It will be shown in forthcoming chapters.

²⁵ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

²⁶ Cult dancing was characteristic of early farmers' rites. The Ancient Greeks wrote about dancing at religious festivals among the inhabitants of Asia Minor and Crete (rudiments of the Neolithic religion were still preserved in these parts of the world as late as Classical Antiquity). Dancing was essential in Hittite, and earlier in Hattian, rituals; the Hattians, who presumably migrated to Asia Minor in the fifth or fourth millennia B.C., must have assimilated dancing from the autochthonous early farming tribes. Dancing was also a cult element among the ancient Hebrews.

of early farming cultures, i.e., to Neolithic symbolism. However, the symbol in the form of a disk with dots around its circumference existed as far back as the Paleolithic Age (Fig. 21: 6); during the same epoch this symbol existed in duplicate form as well (Fig. 179: 2). What was its meaning in the Paleolithic? Most likely it was the same as in the Neolithic — it conveyed the idea of the seed being watered by heavenly moisture. There was no agriculture during Paleolithic times, but even then people would realize that seeds germinate when moistened, and that moisture falls from the sky.

The word *an* in the Sumerian language meant 'sky,' the ancient Roman *anus* (-us being the suffix) meant 'circle, ring,' and 'old woman.' A strange coincidence. In all probability, this is not a coincidence at all. The word *an* could have been borrowed by Mesopotamians and inhabitants of the Mediterranean region from more ancient peoples.

The Sumerian heaven god's name was An, the Mesopotamian Semites and Hurrians called their god Anu. Akkadian texts mention Antu as a female counterpart of Anu²⁷; these names differ in the suffix -t which indicates the feminine gender in Semitic languages. The suffix probably also had this meaning in some of the obsolete languages of Middle Eastern Neolithic farmers: the Sumerians worshipped the goddess Anatu [730a, p. 92]; she was considered the earth goddess and the spouse of the heaven god An (this reflects the notion of the male heaven deity and female earth deity, which was not inherent in the Neolithic farmers' religion). Northern and western Semites had Anta, Anat, Anait (the Iranian Anahita) — "the Great Mother" and the "heaven mistress," the goddess of sensual love (although not infrequently considered a virgin) and of war (Ishtar was another name for this goddess in post-Sumerian Mesopotamia). Andarta was the Celtic she-bear goddess (the spouse of the Neolithic Great Goddess was often pictured as a bear²⁸). Andia is a feminine name in Scandinavia (many proper names derive from names of gods). In all likelihood, some of the languages of early farming tribes did not have the feminine-gender formant -t, judging by the Sanskrit *anu* ('mother'); this word may be considered as borrowing from the vocabulary of Western Asian pre-Indo-European tribes whose mother-goddess' name could be An or Anu (the correspondence of this name to that of the Sumerian heaven god may be an indication that the heaven deity turned male at a certain stage of the evolution of ancient religious conceptions and was not due to Indo-European influence).

In ancient times, a particular people might be called after the deity it worshiped. Byzantine sources mention early medieval tribes who once inhabited the area of present-day Southern Russia — the Antes. This ethnonym may be assumed to derive from the name of a deity. A group of ethnic minorities inhabiting the highland region of Daghestan, farthest from the Caspian Sea, is referred to as the Andi, and Assyrian sources dating from the ninth

²⁷ Hence, probably, the Hebrew *'anan* ('cloud'), *'onen* ('spellbind') and *'anan* ('to be in mourning'; the heaven goddess was the source of death as well as of life).

²⁸ See chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."

to eighth centuries B.C. mention Andiu, a country situated somewhere in Western Asia.

The circle was a sacred symbol, the symbol of the goddess worshiped, and for this reason the place of divine service was outlined by a circle. Druid temples were round sites encircled with stones. Eastern Slavic pagan sanctuaries were open sites round in shape [483, pp. 57-64]. Indian medieval mountain settlements in the southwestern U.S.A. had rectangular dwellings, but the sanctuaries were round. In China, round temples were dedicated to heaven. Ancient rotundas or round Christian churches hark back to the shape of long nonexistent archaic temples of heaven. The words *čerkov*, *Kirche*, *church* derive from the Greek *kirkos*, Latin *circus* ('circle'). These words comprise the stem *k.r* which will be shown in the chapter "The Black God" to be the root of this god's usual name. The names of the Great Goddess and of her spouse were often of the same root; hence the name Kali (*k.l.k.r*).

The goddess was the supreme ruler of life and death; it was believed that people were born and died at her will. Therefore, her image was important in burial ceremonies (she was portrayed on grave stelae, in bas-reliefs on tomb walls, as figurines placed in tombs). The goddess' symbol — the ring — in many cases determined the shape of burial structures. Dolmens and burial mounds were surrounded with circles of stones. The site in the Mycenaean acropolis with shaft tombs was surrounded with a circular wall. Stone circles around burial sites can be encountered from Western Europe to India. Interments inside circles are known even in Australia [649, p. 481]. All these stone circles are not merely protective barriers. Circles of the kind are encountered also inside burial mounds or on their tops. Stone circles laid on the earth's surface over burial sites of the third to second millennia B.C. have been found in the Caucasus and in Siberia.

Cromlechs made up of concentric circles of stones, poles, pits, or trenches are in fact heaven symbols. Sometimes a cromlech or a single circle of stones is found inside a burial mound [355, pp. 8, 20; 697, pp. 67, 72]. The Ars-Khan burial mound in Tuva (South Siberia) is a magnificent round structure 120 meters in diameter dating from the eighth century B.C. Inside this mound is a symbol in the form of several concentric circles and radial lines, consisting of 6000 tree trunks; the so-called Tantalus Grave in Asia Minor has a similar structure; here an identical symbol, also inside the mound, is inlaid with stone [637, pp. 42, 43]. These and many other instances are unequivocal proof of the symbolic significance of structures built in the form of a circle or cromlech (concentric circles).

The opinion that stone circles, both single and concentric, are "indicative of the solar cult" [355, pp. 7, 20], is an expression of a common naive view according to which any circle in ancient cult symbolism represented the sun. The nature of many ancient graphemes having round outlines should long have made questionable the assumption that they were ever solar in their reference; at the same time interpreting them as heaven symbols makes it possible to account for their specific features. For example, the circle with segments around the perimeter shown in Figure 24: 1 can be understood as a conventional representation of the sky overcast with clouds. What is, indeed, shown

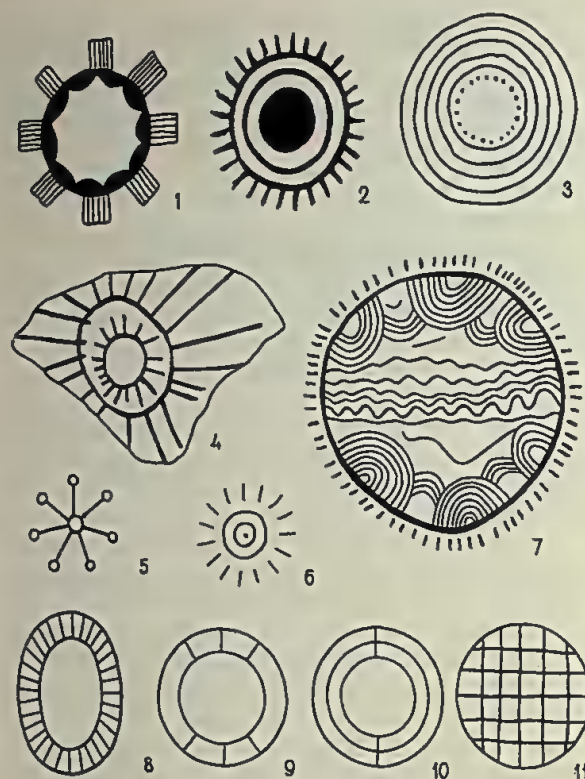


Fig. 24. Pseudo-sun since Neolithic to 20th c.: 1 — France [719, p. 92]; 2 — Greece [719, p. 331]; 3 — Moldavia [696, p. 95]; 4 — Central Asia [34, p. 91]; 5 — Baltic region [693, p. 18]; 6 — pre-Columbian America [702, p. 103]; 7 — rock wall painting, Northern Africa [627, pl. 46]; 8 — Russian Army cockade; 9—11 — Hungary, Early Bronze Age [734, pl. 16]; 12 — ancient N — Eastern cult symbol among aborigines of Australia.

in Figure 24: 7? The round design (large and not quite circular) is the sky; the wavy lines inside represent the moisture contained in the sky; the concentric semiovals adjacent to the circle are rain clouds; the strokes around the circumference designate rain sent down from heaven. These examples are from the Mediterranean region. A photograph taken in remote Australia (Fig. 24: 12) shows aborigines worshipping an abstract design which looks like a round shape with concentric circles within and concentric

semiovals around the circumference (here the semiovals are drawn outside the circle, and not inside it, as is the case in Figure 24: 1, 7). The ancient Cretan and Ossetian objects mentioned earlier are disks whose inner space is filled with arcs. There can be no doubt that in all these examples the grapheme expresses the same idea: the notion of the heaven deity (or, at least of the sky).

If the semioval and disk or circle are semantically equivalent, then, in all probability, the semioval and disk or circle furnished with radial strokes are also symbols with identical or similar meaning. The half-disk with radial lines (as in Figure 10: 1) resembles a half-sun. However, the half-disk may occur in combination with unidirectional (Fig. 10: 8) and not only radial lines; this design is unlikely to bear any solar image. The half-disk with unidirectional lines designates a cloud and rain. A comparative analysis shows that the half-disk with radial lines in Figure 10: 1 has the same meaning. This semantics of the symbol is attested by the concentric arcs forming a halo around the half-disk and by the dots inside, which designate the seed being watered by the raincloud. Thus, the circle with rays around the circumference has no solar reference (at least, in Neolithic symbolism), but is rather a conventional designation of a raincloud or of heaven; in other words, it is the heaven goddess symbol.

An analysis of specific instances of the use of this sign in Neolithic symbolism confirms the conclusion. Here is an example. Commonly used in the Neolithic period was a decorative design consisting of two staggered ornamental elements. Let us compare several examples (Fig. 25)²⁹; the comparison is particularly justified in this case since the examples are from the same culture. A rectangle with inner dots or checkered is one of the two staggered elements: it symbolizes land (which is pictured strewn with seed or divided into cultivated plots). Another element in the design is a certain sign of the heaven goddess, namely: 1 — a pair of semiovals (raincloud signs); 2 — a pair of

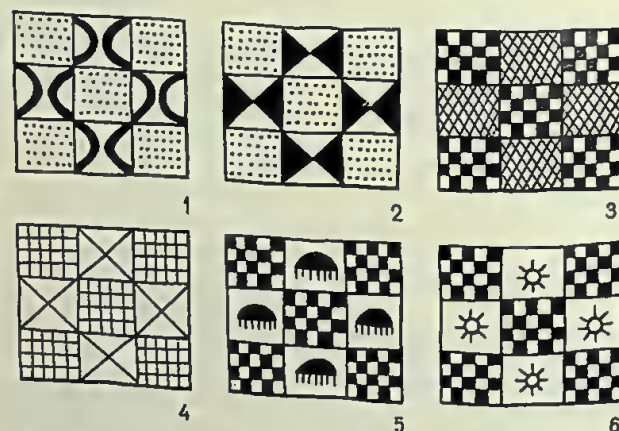


Fig. 25. Rain cloud symbols in Neolithic: 1—6 — Northern Mesopotamia [701, fig. 58].

²⁹ The similarity between Figures 25: 4 (Syria, fourth millennium B.C.) and 404: 3 (Northern Caucasus, 18th century) is striking. If this is due to like conditions, it would be most interesting to learn what those conditions were and how they led to identical patterns in both cases.
³⁰ See chapter "The Oblique Cross."



Fig. 26. Asymmetric pseudo-sun symbols: 1, 4 — carved stones, Daghestan, the villages of Dzilebki and Kakashura; 2, 5 — rock wall paintings in Armenia [340, p. 25] and Urals [549, pp. 173, 171]; 3 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 94]; 6 — Checheno-Ingushetia [386, fig. 53]; 7—8 — Ancient Egypt [774, p. 390; 639, p. 88; 675, p. 78]; 10 — medieval Scandinavia [693, p. 23].

triangles (the same); 3 — hatching which may be considered a conventional representation of rain; 4 — oblique cross (an emblem of the goddess³⁰); 5 — a cloud from which rain pours down; and finally, 6 — a circle with strokes along the circumference. What does this latter sign signify? By analogy with other designs, it must be the heaven goddess sign presumably standing for the cloud from which rain falls.

Publications touching upon or dealing specifically with the semantics of ancient symbolic designs are invariably positive that any circle in such designs is solar in connotation. But why? For the sole reason that the sun (incidentally, the moon, too) were the only round objects people saw in their natural surroundings? But man does not merely imitate what his eyes see, he can also create things previously unfamiliar. Even Neanderthal man had imagination. Why then deny this quality to Upper Paleolithic and especially Neolithic and Bronze Age people? In those times people did not necessarily copy the external appearance of visible objects; otherwise, there would have been nothing mysterious about ancient symbols, moreover, there would have been no symbolism at all. Drawings from nature would have been the only form of artistic expression.

The roundness of the pattern (even when supplemented by radial extensions around the perimeter) is not a sufficient basis for classifying the design as a portrayal of the sun. This is particularly so since such a semantic interpretation of the designs presents difficulties. Indeed, if this is a solar design, why should it be so odd — with segments around the perimeter, with separated ray fascicles, with concentric circles, with dots inside, with networks of lines, why should it be oval, doubled, etc. (Fig. 24)? Particularly common is the so-called "sun" with concentric circles inside the disk (Fig. 24: 2, 6). What objective factors could lead to

such a representation of the sun, and in both the Old and New Worlds?

It will follow from the evidence discussed in the next chapter that the disk with or without rays could in fact have been a solar symbol, not, however, in the Neolithic; the transition to such a meaning of the sign took place in the Bronze Age.

A sign is sometimes encountered in the form of a disk with short lines on one side only (Fig. 26). The meaning of a sun with one-sided rays is not known; it is quite possible that in the Bronze Age such designs were not even perceived as solar, but were merely sacred signs which then had no particular meaning. Some authors believe that they designated the rising sun [678, p. 6]. In Ancient Egypt this type of design symbolized the sun shedding its rays on earth (Fig. 26: 9). In a number of cases, however, it is impossible to detect any solar resemblance in these designs; for example, when the "rays" are shown by wavy or zigzag lines (Fig. 26: 7, 8, 10). Such examples suggest that the design in the form of a disk with a fascicle of lines on one side symbolizes the sky and rain.

The sign in the form of a circle with one-sided rays existed as far back as the Paleolithic (Fig. 26: 3); so did the form of an arch with rays (Fig. 10: 3). In the second case this sign is within an oval which is a symbolic designation of heaven. The combination of an oval and arc with rays is the ideograph of the notion "sky and rain." There was no agriculture in the Paleolithic, so it would seem there could be no praying for rain. But apparently there did exist the cult of the heaven goddess with whose image rain was associated, whether people needed it or not.

Or rather, people could not help realizing, even before agriculture developed, that moisture promoted the growth of the plants they used for food. The conceptions of the early farming religion could already have been in existence prior to agricultural techniques, because, as scholars have pointed out, tribes which lived by hunting and collecting had an idea of the conditions necessary for plant growth [650].

An ancient sacred emblem in the form of a disk on a pedestal is known to have existed in various parts of the region embracing Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus. This disk on a medieval Scandinavian grave stela (Fig. 26: 10) must designate the sky, since below it there are zigzags, i.e., rain. To be more accurate, the zigzags in this case may be considered as no more than a tribute to tradition, because by that time in Europe the disk, especially in combination with a cross, seems to have symbolized the sun.

Similar designs were found in Georgia (Fig. 27: 2). Here, too, we see a disk with a cross under which there are vertical lines (pendants) obviously designating rain. Numerous medieval grave stelae in Daghestan bear this emblem, i.e., the disk on a pedestal (Fig. 27: 1). There are horizontal strokes under the disk, identical with a variant of the Neolithic rain sign (Fig. 8: 2).

Ancient fringed banners (Fig. 27: 3, 4) look like an emblem which might have different origins: early farmers considered the oblique cross as a heaven goddess symbol; during the Bronze Age this could have been a sun god

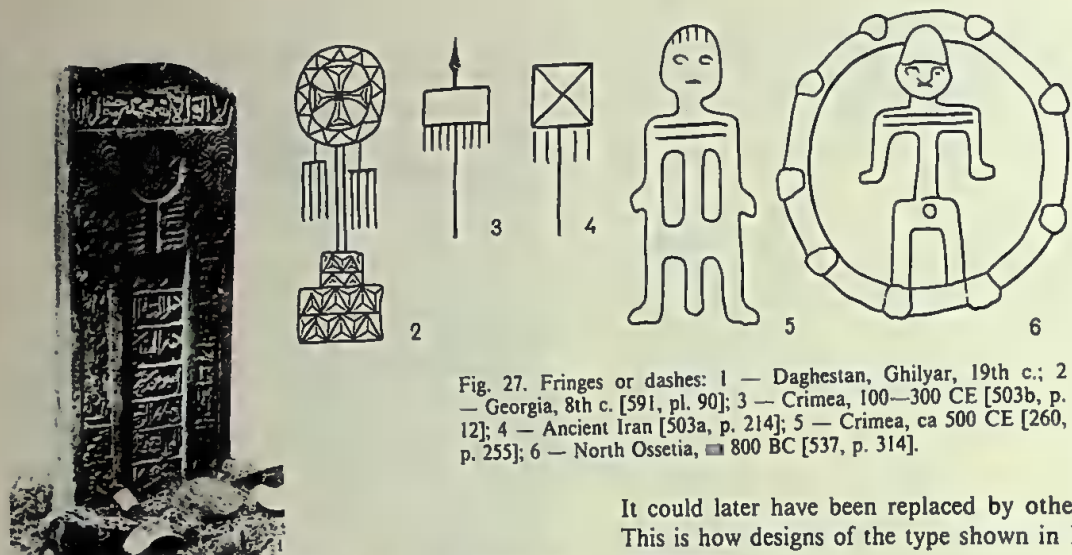


Fig. 27. Fringes or dashes: 1 — Daghestan, Ghilyar, 19th c.; 2 — Georgia, 8th c. [591, pl. 90]; 3 — Crimea, 100—300 CE [503b, p. 12]; 4 — Ancient Iran [503a, p. 214]; 5 — Crimea, ca 500 CE [260, p. 255]; 6 — North Ossetia, 800 BC [537, p. 314].

symbol. Consequently, the emblem on these banners represented either the heaven goddess bestowing rain or the sun god sending down rays. At the same time, figurines with line strokes on the chest (Fig. 27: 5, 6) seem to depict a sun deity, for they have an attribute of masculinity. Or else, they could represent a heaven god which in the Bronze Age replaced the Neolithic heaven goddess.

On some Neolithic vessels (in different places of the vast territory extending from Central Europe to Iran) there is a heaven goddess symbol within semiovals or triangles designating the raincloud (Fig. 28). The meaning of this ideograph would be that the goddess is the mistress of rain.

Such designs are probably a further development of older ones in which a dot or a dot surrounded by a circle was placed inside a semioval (Fig. 12). A circle with a dot symbolized heaven ever since the Paleolithic. The circle with a dot also designated a swollen seed. This resulted in a semantic contamination (confusing) of signs which look alike, but differ in meaning, i.e., the meaning of one sign was transposed to the other. A circle with a dot placed in a semioval originally meant a swollen seed watered by cloud moisture, but it came to be perceived as a symbol of the heaven goddess, the mistress of rain.



Fig. 28. Cloud sign with pseudo-sun: 1, 2, 4 — Austria, 3000—2000 BC [719, pp. 331, 199]; 3 — Iran, ca 2000 BC [14, pl. 83].

THE SUN

Different types of rosettes are a popular ornamental motif in the architecture and decorative arts of Daghestan (Fig. 29). They are nonfigurative, representing abstract geometrical patterns. Only in isolated instances does the rosette resemble a floral design (Fig. 30: 1).

Plant ornament is not typical of the native art of mountainous Caucasus, including Daghestan. The original culture of the Caucasian highlanders is devoid of admiration for plants, in particular, flowers. It is not customary to twine wreaths, pick flowers and arrange them into bouquets, or keep flowers in vases. This suggests that the floral rosettes in Daghestan are the result of Oriental influences experienced since the late Middle Ages. Similarly, in Eu-

rope, including Russia, the archaic stratum of decorative folk art is characterized by geometrical ornament, whereas more recent art prefers vegetal designs. Ancient Greece, as its culture gradually assimilated Mid-Eastern artistic principles, also adopted a transition from the geometrical to the vegetal ornament.

But the dissimilar representations of rosettes were due not only to different stylistic devices of ornamental arrangement. The two types of rosette can be traced to different semantic sources.

The Neolithic earliest farmers' decorative art used floral images and floral-like rosettes (Fig. 37: 3): in Western Asia, vegetal (including floral) motifs symbolized fertility of the



Fig. 29. Carved wooden Daghestan caskets, 1700—1850.



Fig. 30. Rosettes on carved stones, Daghestan: 1 — Itsari; 2 — Khushtada.

soil (Fig. 16).³¹ As for the design in the form of a disk filled with abstract geometrical patterns, there is nothing to suggest an original association with flowers. In order to come closer to deciphering its meaning one has to study its role in specific designs and to take into account the mythology of the cultures in which it was popular.

Compositional analyses are, unfortunately, not helpful, since the rosette in the available examples is usually present as a purely decorative motif, devoid of any meaningful content. In some cases it can be assumed to designate the sun. In ancient oriental civilizations, mainly in Egypt and Mesopotamia, a sun god was worshiped, and the sun was represented as it was visually perceived: as a disk. Some evidence makes it possible to assume that the rosette, which previously symbolized heaven, turned into a symbolic designation of the sun. For example, there are ancient representations of a chariot transporting a disk

³¹ A plant-type rosette often occurs on Neolithic ceramic vessels of Mesopotamia and Elam. It is usually placed at the center of the design, like other earth symbols.

(also with radial ray-like lines), which can be contemplated in the light of the myth of the solar chariot (Fig. 392). The rosette in the design shown in Figure 30: 2 possibly designated the sun (although it may also be interpreted as a heaven symbol).

In Daghestan and highland Georgia, archaic houses have rosette designs on parts of the fireplace or on elements of the living room close to the fireplace, the rosettes facing the fire. Fire in the cult conceptions of the mountainous Caucasian populations and of the Indo-European nations was associated with the sun (although this association will be shown as largely relative).

The façades of Western European medieval churches usually feature a large round stained-glass window in the form of a rosette. This architectural detail had no utilitarian function. It can hardly be regarded as a compositional device, for Romanesque architecture does not take artistic liberties. In all probability, it is a symbol. Pagan temples had their altars facing westwards, so that the entrance was from the east (this orientation was sometimes traditionally maintained in early Christian temples). While the rosette over the entrance of the Romanesque or Gothic church

is inherited from paganism, it was apparently originally associated with the idea of sunrise, as it faced east. It may be assumed then that it symbolized the sun. On the other hand, it might as well have continued symbolizing the sky, because the round window admitting the rays of the rising sun could be an allegorical representation of the sky incorporating the rising sun. This architectural detail could originally have had a practical (more specifically, practical-cult) as well as symbolic function — lighting the temple interior with the rays of the morning sun. Written documents attest the existence of pagan Slavic temples with openings for letting in the rays of the rising sun [491, pp. 66, 67].

We can judge from the available evidence that Indo-European paganism to a certain extent involved the cult of the sun, but no heaven goddess cult was typical of it. Hence, the decorative motif, or a symbolic sign, in the form of a rosette would be solar in reference to Indo-European nations and not associated with either sky or cloud.

When discussing the meaning of signs of circular shape it may be wise to take into account the fact that the disk designated the sun in ancient civilizations of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia. But at the same time it is essential to keep in mind that the mythology and pagan observances of the European peoples differed from those of the ancient oriental civilizations; besides, the complex of cult symbols analyzed in this book is largely alien to the Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Hittite religions, while in Egypt it has parallels only during the pre-dynastic epoch.

The above reasoning provides some general grounds for assuming that rosettes in post-Neolithic European and Western Asian symbolism might be solar symbols. It cannot, however, be ruled out that in the Bronze Age the circle, disk, and rosette sometimes maintained their former significance as heaven symbols.

The purpose of the rosette as a solar sign is therefore not as evident as it may sometimes seem. It has to be proved, and that is not easy. Materials from the Caucasus, especially the Northern Caucasus, provide even less ground for attributing the rosette to solar designs than does the European evidence.

Caucasian highlanders (with the exception of the Ossets) do not belong linguistically to Indo-Europeans. Little is known of their mythology, but the scant information available suggests that sun veneration was still in existence among them to some extent during the Middle Ages. For example, medieval tombs in Chechenia and Ingushetia were called "solar graves"; the name of the Malkhistæ canyon means "the sun country" in Chechen, despite its being a bleak, uninviting terrain; "the Sun Canyon" is the name of an area in Ingushetia where the Armkhi River flows, and of a location in North Ossetia where the highly revered Rekom sanctuary is situated; there is a Chechen legend about a "solar wheel" which destroys everything in its way.

This is not enough to lead to confident conclusions. Evidence on the "sun cult" among Caucasian highlanders is scanty and vague. As for Daghestan, nothing there indicates sun worship.

Let us analyze different variants of the rosette.

Daghestan ornaments abound in rosettes with definite numbers of petals, mostly six (Fig. 31: 1; see also examples of Daghestan rosettes as presented by S. Khan-Magomedov [562, p. 107]). An ornamental motif in the form of a six-petal rosette, similar to that in Daghestan, is common in the decorative folk art of Eastern Europe and in the ancient art of the Mediterranean region (Fig. 31: 2-5).

A rosette of this type can easily be reproduced with the help of compasses. Yet ancient cult symbols did not arise out of geometrical exercises. In this case the graphic technique was used for drawing an already existing symbol. Different variants of six-element star-shaped figures are known (Figs. 320, 321), and the six-petal rosette is one of them; besides, it is chronologically a more recent variant whose popularity grew as regular graphic art, implemented with the help of instruments, ousted free design and tracing by hand.

B. Rybakov believes that the sign in the form of a six-ray rosette resulted from the combination of a circle allegedly symbolizing the sun and a schematic representation of a snowflake allegedly symbolizing the sky [475, p. 298]. However, there is evidence pointing to a different origin of the "snowflake"; it will be discussed in the chapter entitled "Stars."

Both Slavs and Daghestanians decorated their saltcellars with a six-petaled rosette. This is remarkable in itself, because Slavs and Caucasian highlanders had no contacts in the historically accountable past. In this case, as well as in many others, analogies can be explained thus: cultural phenomena were inherited by contemporary peoples from previous epochs, when these phenomena, passing from one

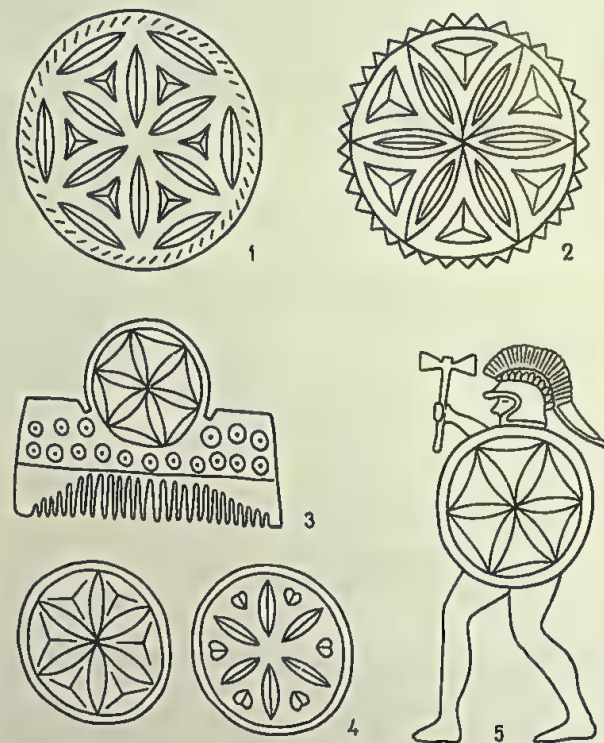


Fig. 31. Six-petal rosette in decorative art: 1 — Daghestan; 2 — Carpathian Ukraine [311, fig. 49]; 3 — Spain, Roman period [800b, p. 289]; 4 — Estonia [268, p. 110]; 5 — Etruscan, ca 700 BC [692, pl. 59].

ethnic community to another in the course of long millennia, spread over vast territories, in some cases throughout the world.

But where does the connection between the rosette and salt lie? B. Rybakov sees it in that the rosette symbolized the sun, the salt being "a product associated with solar activity" [475, p. 303]. It may appear that this assumption is supported by the fact that there are similarly sounding words in some European languages for 'salt' and 'sun.' But that is a different matter. The reason for the similarity of these words will be discussed later. Meanwhile, it will suffice to point out that the rosette is the heaven goddess symbol, and salt, being white, was associated with the goddess whose color symbol, as will be shown, was white. In Russia the rosette was also used to adorn distaffs, which is perfectly natural, as the Great Goddess was considered a protectress of spinning, as has been established with certainty.

No real evidence corroborates the assumption that the six-petal rosette used to be a solar sign. But it is known to have been a symbol of Ishtar, a goddess of the Ancient East, a descendant of the heaven goddess of the early farming period.

In accordance with the verbal information available, the six-petal rosette and a sign in the form of a six-spoke wheel also served as emblems of the male god, the thunderer. Why these symbols were associated with the image of this particular deity will be discussed later; what interests us at the moment is that both the six-petal rosette and the six-spoke wheel could symbolize this god, and, consequently, that these signs are semantically identical. As will be shown, they belong in the category of the six-pointed graphemes which appeared in the sixth millennium B.C. and at that time symbolized a certain cosmological concept³² (these symbols could subsequently have been attributed to other deities). As regards the resemblance to the wheel, it is accidental. Wheels with spokes were first used in the second millennium B.C., whereas the graphemes resembling them appeared much earlier, in the Paleolithic era, when wheels were simply nonexistent. In later times a sign resembling a wheel was also known in cultures which did not use wheels (Fig. 32: 4).³³

The history of the symbol resembling a wheel is a perfect demonstration of how misleading a methodology can be which regards ancient cult symbols as originating from images of objects, so that if a sign resembles an object, it is assumed to designate it. By such an approach one can conclude that Figure 32: 1 depicts a pinion or a tractor wheel with spurs of the type manufactured in the 1920s

³²See chapter "Stars."

³³The principle of the wheel was known in pre-Columbian America. Ancient models of wheel-barrows and figurines of animals on wheels have been found on the American continent. But they are cult objects similar to those commonly encountered in the Ancient Orient, from where they were introduced to the New World. There were no wheeled vehicles in pre-Columbian America. Large stone disks with an aperture at the center were discovered in Peru; the archeologists who found them hastened to call them wheels. However, the stone wheel cannot be a part of a carriage; it would soon wear out the wooden fastenings or break against the uneven road; besides, a carriage with stone wheels would be too heavy; there were no horses in pre-Columbian America, and bulls (bisons) were not domesticated. These stone disks are cult objects similar to those known in the Old World since the Paleolithic.

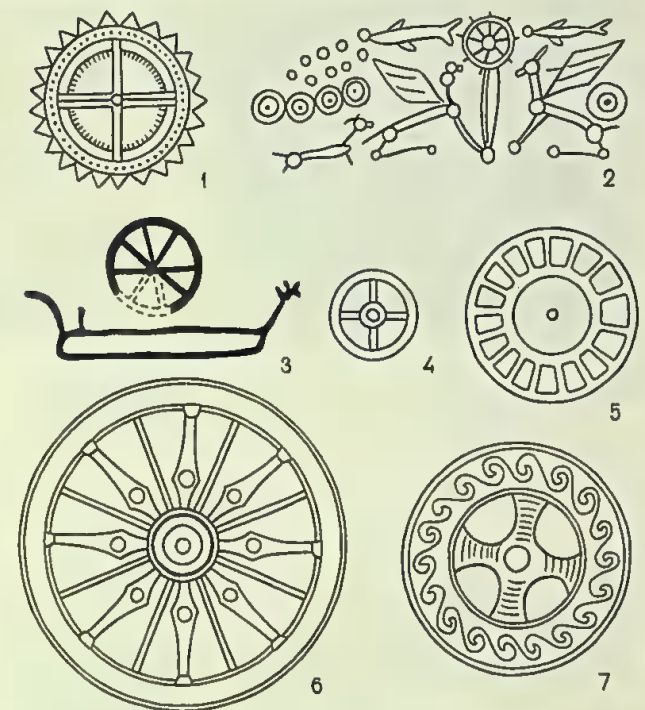


Fig. 32. Cult symbol of wheel and its prototype: 1 — Ancient Crete [658, p. 316]; 2 — Hittite [748, p. 393]; 3 — Sweden, Bronze Age [743, p. 165]; 4 — pre-Columbian America [657a, pl. 12]; 5 — Northern Caucasus, early Middle Ages [367, pl. 25]; 6 — wheel on the façade of a temple of the Sun in India, 13th c. [534, pl. 45]; 7 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [825, p. 234].

and 1930s; however, there were no pinions or tractors in Ancient Crete. Looking at Fig. 32: 2, one can decide that there is a steering wheel in the center of the design (especially as fishes are drawn next to it); however, in those times Hittite ships were not equipped with steering wheels.

In 1884, two publications appeared, one by H. Gaidoz [687] and the other by Th. Inman [723], which claimed that the sign resembling a wheel served as a solar symbol in ancient times. An Indo-European tradition does mention a comparison of the sun to a wheel, which is perfectly justified, for this tradition goes back to a time when wheels already existed. The Rig-Veda relates that the sun "rolls like a wheel" [748, p. 390]; the Edda uses the word "wheel" for the sun [829, p. 37]; the sun is compared to a wheel in Slavic and Lithuanian songs [200, p. 135; 435, p. 10; 693, p. 6]. The sign resembling a wheel was sometimes shown on boats (Fig. 32: 3) or carriages (Fig. 392); this conforms to the well-known mythological conception that the sun travels in a boat or in a chariot. For this reason, ancient cult objects in the form of bronze wheel models ([659b, p. 293]; Fig. 32: 7) may be considered solar symbols.

However, Neolithic graphemes resembling a wheel with spokes could not possibly be images of wheels. Neither were they solar symbols (it was shown in the preceding chapter that the disk in the symbolism of early farming cultures was an emblem of the sky rather than of the sun, and the radial lines around the disk circumference or within it designated rain rather than sun rays).

The wheel-like sign of the sky first appeared during



Fig. 33. Cogged rosettes in Daghestan: 1, 2 — incised stones in mosque walls, Khushlada and Khindakh; 3 — bronze pendant, 800 BC, Avaria [235, p. 52]; 4 — grave stela, Ashaga- Kartas.

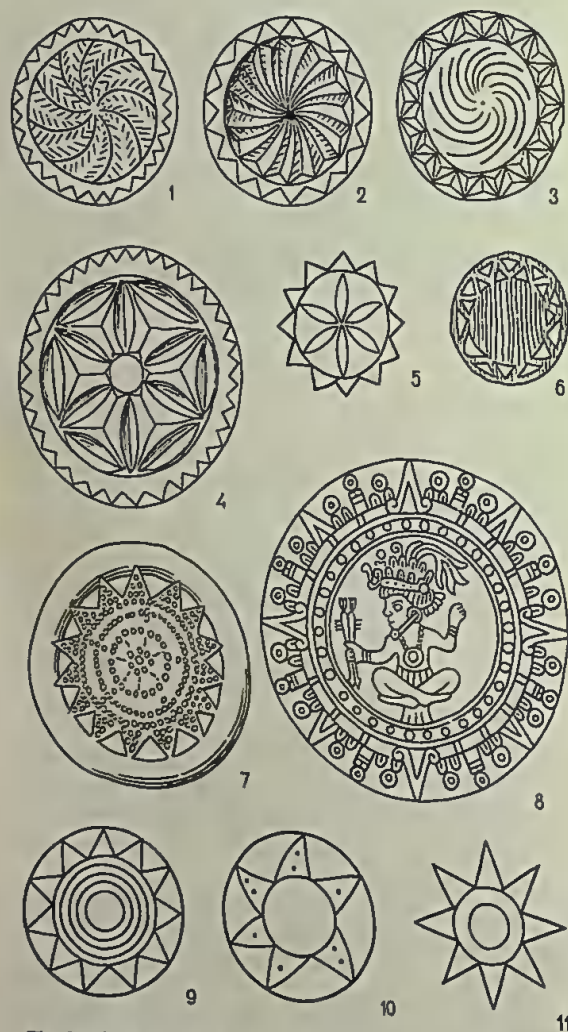


Fig. 34. Cogged rosettes: 1 — Russia, 17th c.; 2 — Turkmenia, 19th c. [294, p. 79]; 3 — Russia, 17th c. [142c, p. 46]; 4 — Bulgaria, 19th c. [157, p. 15]; 5 — Asia Minor, 100–400 CE [805, p. 288]; 6 — Karelia, Neolithic [81, p. 180]; 7 — Daghestan, ca 1900 [139, p. 111]; 8 — Ancient Mexico [657b]; 9 — Denmark, Aeneolithic [782, pl. 647]; 10 — Northern Mesopotamia, 6000 BC [649, p. 65]; 11 — Ancient Egypt [782c, pl. 163].

the epoch when mankind knew no wheels. Wheels came into use during the time of the collapse of early farming cultures. The conceptions of Neolithic religion were then still in force to some extent. The wheel became a heaven symbol at that period, not only because the available sign of the sky resembled a wheel, but also because the starry sky revolved like one. This natural phenomenon is especially well observed in the example of the Ursa Major constellation near the North Star; the constellation is compared to a wheel in a number of mythologies and is not infrequently referred to as a "chariot," particularly since it resembles the outline of a carriage. The heaven goddess was still well remembered in those times. She was pictured as a destroyer, and that quality was attributed to the wheel; an Ossetian epic characterizes the "heavenly wheel" as a death-dealing weapon, the "death wheel."

At about the time that the wheel became a symbol of the sky, the heaven god superseded the heaven goddess. By origin, he is a heavenly counterpart of the underworld god who, rising up into the sky, produced thunderstorms.³⁴ Thus the wheel became a symbol of the thundergod whose image is known from myths and traditions over the past three thousand years. Slavs called the six-petal rosette a "thunder sign," ancient Romans called the circle with six radial lines a "Jupiter wheel," the Celts associated the wheel shape with the underworld god Taranis (this name is etymologically related to the word *tarann* — "thunder" [814, p. 196].

The likening of the sun to a wheel could not have been conceived before the Bronze Age, or at least before the Aeneolithic. But the graphic symbol resembling a wheel was borrowed from the earlier farmers' symbolism. Alongside this sign, other disk-like graphemes deriving from the Neolithic were used. It is possible that they, too, were assimilated to serve as solar symbols. Various circles, disks, and rosettes seemed solar symbols to those

³⁴See chapter "The White God."

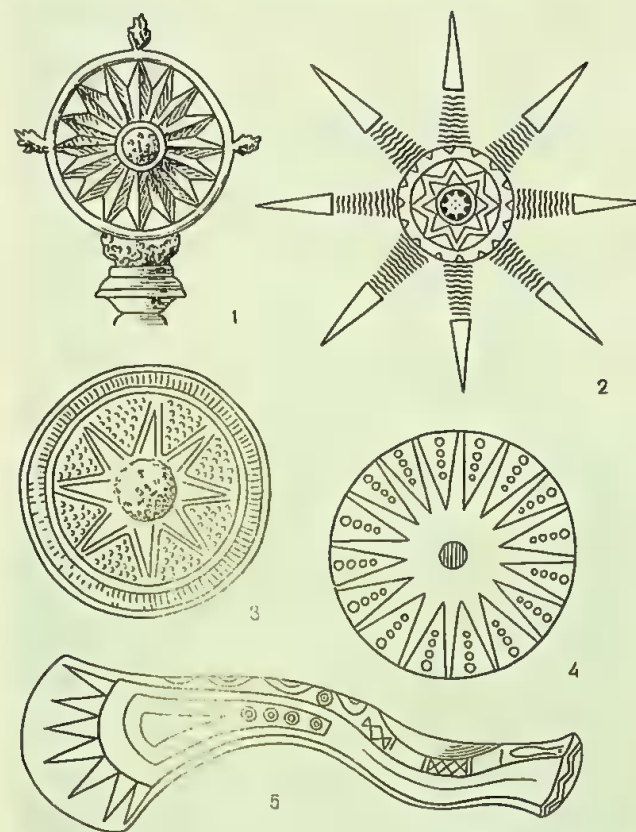


Fig. 35. Rosettes with pointed cogs: 1 — Buddhist symbol of the sun [451, p. 761]; 2 — Palestine, ca 4000 BC [237, p. 104]; 3 — Denmark, Bronze Age [735, p. 11]; 4 — Ancient Crete [676a, p. 479]; 5 — North Ossetia, Koban culture, ca 1000 BC [646b, pl. 1].

who did not know their authentic semantics (as is also the case of modern scholars), especially considering that the sun by that time had come to be regarded as a major deity.

Serrated rosettes are abundant in Daghestan (Fig. 33). They are encountered in large numbers in the Caucasus and Eurasia (Fig. 34). The presence of such a symbol in Ancient Mexico (Fig. 34: 8) exemplifies a familiarity of American Indian civilizations with Old World symbolism. Serrated rosettes are found not only in relics of the ancient civilizations of Mexico and Guatemala, but also in rock wall paintings in North America [702, pp. 64, 109, 149].

The ethnographer P. Zholtovsky decided for some strange reason that the triangles around the rosette perimeter are a conventionalized depiction of a line of people joining hands and moving in a cult dance [176, p. 2], while the archeologist A. Bryussov believed that such a rosette represented a wheel with spokes [81, p. 183], although he does not explain why spokes should be represented by triangles; incidentally, in Karelia such a sign (Fig. 34: 6) was painted on rocks when wheels, all the more wheels with spokes, did not yet exist.

The serrated rosette with pointed radially arranged teeth (Fig. 35) seems to be a conventionalized representation of the sun with rays. True, the toothed rosette used to be a solar symbol in Buddhism (Fig. 35: 1) and in the cultures of pre-Columbian America [43; 740, p. 105]. But why were the sun beams pointed? In nature they do not taper but rather expand.

It so happened that this solar emblem was assimilated from Neolithic symbolism. However, its meaning in the Neolithic was different. If a vessel decorated with a ring of triangles is inspected from above (Fig. 34: 10) and not frontally (Fig. 11: 5), a toothed rosette will be the image perceived. In the distant past the serrations designated rain clouds. In the example shown in Figure 35: 2 the tapering teeth indeed designate rain clouds, because the wavy lines, the water signs, are present within them. The picture represents the sky overcast with rain clouds, rather than sunshine. These semantics of the design are confirmed by the fact that it can be traced to the fourth millennium B.C., a period which maintained Neolithic traditions. The serrated rosettes which have reached us from that remote past not infrequently incorporate a disk with two or several concentric circles (Fig. 34: 9, 11), i.e., a sign of the sky.

This symbol continued to be used during the Bronze Age, although with a different meaning in conformance with other religious beliefs. In view of the fact that in the second millennium B.C. Europe was inhabited by Indo-European tribes, it may be assumed that the symbol in the form of a disk crowned with raylike cogs (Fig. 35: 3) could then designate the sun. Ancient Cretan designs of the same type (Fig. 35: 4), also dating back to the second millennium B.C., however, convey the previous meaning, i.e., they still served as the heaven symbol, since the Cretan population of the Minoan epoch was not Indo-European. The civilization of Ancient Crete, prior to its conquest in the 14th century B.C. by invaders from the continent, can be regarded as the last manifestation of pre-Indo-European cultures in Southeastern Europe and Western Asia, which outlived the others by about 500 years.

The collection of emblems available includes varieties with teeth around the perimeter of the disk (or oval) pointed inwards, rather than outwards (Figs. 36; 202: 1). A published illustration of an ancient Egyptian design (Fig. 36: 4) was accompanied by a commentary: "The sun shining over the Pharaoh's tomb." The rising sun does have an oval shape. However, it is hard to conceive

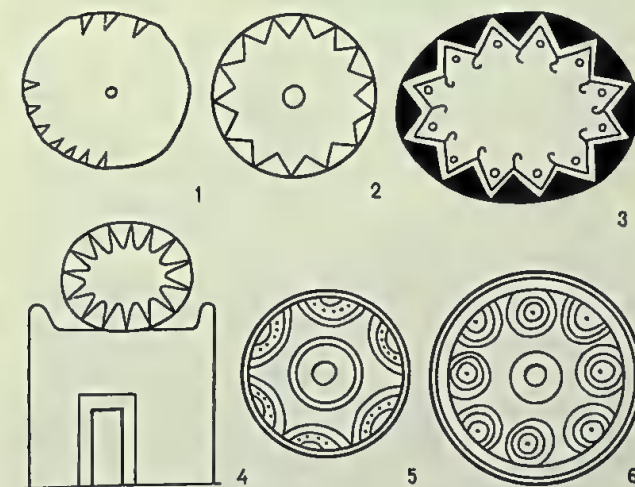


Fig. 36. Rosettes with inward-turned cogs or semiovals: 1 — France, Paleolithic [754a, pl. 79]; 2 — Sicily, ca 2500 BC [676a, p. 21]; 3 — Western Ukraine, ca 1900 [470, p. 59]; 4 — Ancient Egypt [639, p. 335]; 5 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, pl. 32]; 6 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [825, p. 86].



Fig. 37. Flower-shaped rosettes: 1, 2 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [824, p. 557]; 3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 469].

what the rising sun has to do with a pharaoh's tomb in terms of ancient Egyptian or earlier Neolithic religious observances. Moreover, if the design represents the sun, what is the meaning of the inverted teeth around the circumference (they rather resemble paddles, similar to the outlines of a necklace, i.e., of a cloud analogue — see Figs. 18: 6 or 8: 7)? If this is the sky rather than the sun, all becomes clear: the goddess was the source of death as well as life. Whoever died went to her, and this idea is in our case expressed in the emblem of the goddess, the heaven sign. The emblem of the goddess on a tomb has the same meaning as do the figurines found in Late Neolithic burial places in Egypt and Western Europe.

A comparison of the designs in Figure 36: 2, 4 indicates that the triangles (cogs) are semantically identical with semiovals (see also Fig. 24: 1, 7) which, as shown above, represented rain clouds in the Neolithic. In Figure 36: 3, next to the cogs are little circles (seeds) and hooks (which, as will follow from our analysis, are to be considered as a conventional designation of vegetation). This ideograph expresses the thought of the ancient farmer as did those dealt with in the preceding chapter: a supplication for heavenly moisture to irrigate fields and corn shoots and provide rich crops.

It is interesting that the heaven symbol in the form of a disk with inverted cogs around the perimeter first appeared in the Paleolithic, when there was farming (Fig. 36: 1).

Quite possibly, if Neolithic symbols in the form of disks or various types of rosettes were taken by people of subsequent epochs as representations of the sun, toothed rosettes would seem to them images of the shining sun.

In the Neolithic period, two fundamentally different types of rosette existed in the Mediterranean region, which also differed semantically: a conventionalized vegetal design (a symbol of soil fertility) and a disk crowned with teeth (an emblem of the heaven goddess). During the Bronze Age, when the meaning of the old symbols was forgotten, hybrid or intermediate forms appeared combining characteristics of both types of rosette (Fig. 37: 1, 2).

An occasional rosette may have two rings of teeth (Fig. 38). It is hard to say whether such a variant of the design had a special meaning in the Bronze Age, but it also originates in early farmers' symbolism. Moreover, such a grapheme was known as far back as the Mesolithic period (Fig. 38: 4). Examples of doubled signs of the goddess have been discussed above, and this phenomenon will be encountered repeatedly. The two rings of cogs — rain-cloud signs — in the ornamentation and symbolism of pre-Indo-European times should, in all probability, also be grouped with this type of symbol. A semantic analogy to

the rosette with two crowns of cogs is a doubled pseudosun (Fig. 24: 4).

In the Bronze epoch, when the toothed rosette was taken to represent the sun, the same question presumably arose — why should sunbeams be pointed? And the answer was found: a conception developed to the effect that these pointed beams designated the spears or arrows of the sun-god. Correspondingly, representations of the sun appeared with beams in the form of spears and arrows (Figs. 39: 2; 361: 2). Sunbeams were identified in legends with arrows of the sun-god [501, p. 55]. In some languages the words 'arrow' and 'ray' have the same root [543c, p. 774]. Such an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the spear or arrow was also prompted by the fact that the spear and arrow, even before, in the early farming period,

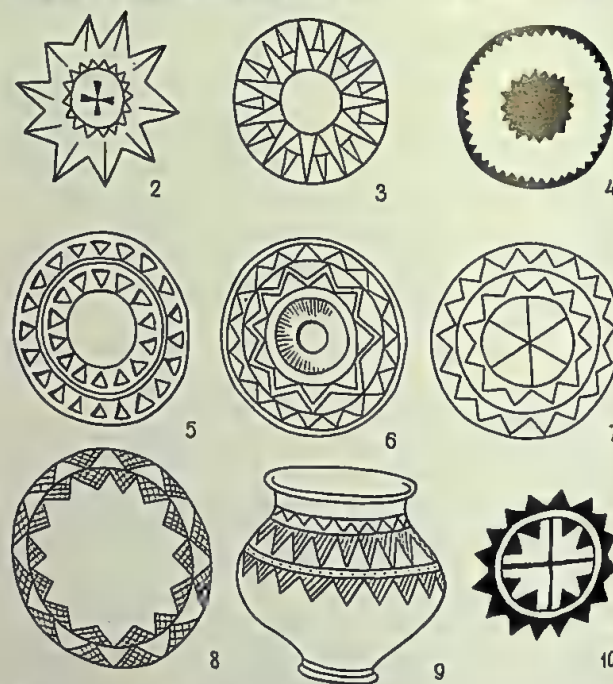
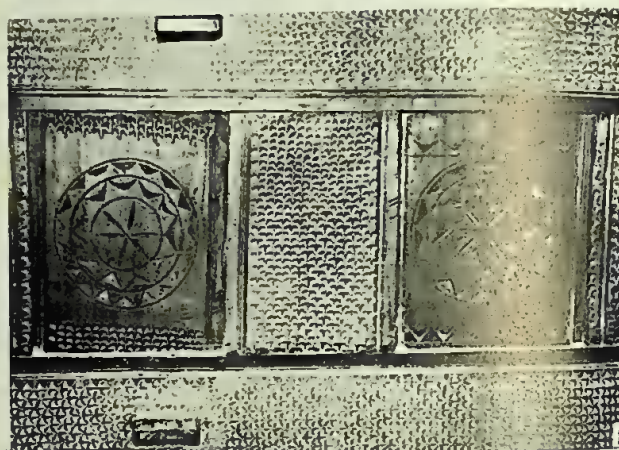


Fig. 38. Rosettes with double ring of cogs: 1 — fragment of a carved wooden casket, ca 1800, Daghestan, Duakar; 2 — diagram on a carved stone, Daghestan, Khushkada [37, p. 368]; 3 — impression of a seal, Daghestan, ca 1850 [179, p. 187]; 4 — France, Mesolithic [760, p. 126]; 5 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 43]; 6 — Troy, Bronze Age [827, pl. 22]; 7 — Russia, 14th c. [138, p. 96]; 8 — prehistoric Egypt [794, pl. 12]; 9 — Italy, Bronze Age [772, pl. 42]; 10 — pre-Columbian America [702, p. 109].

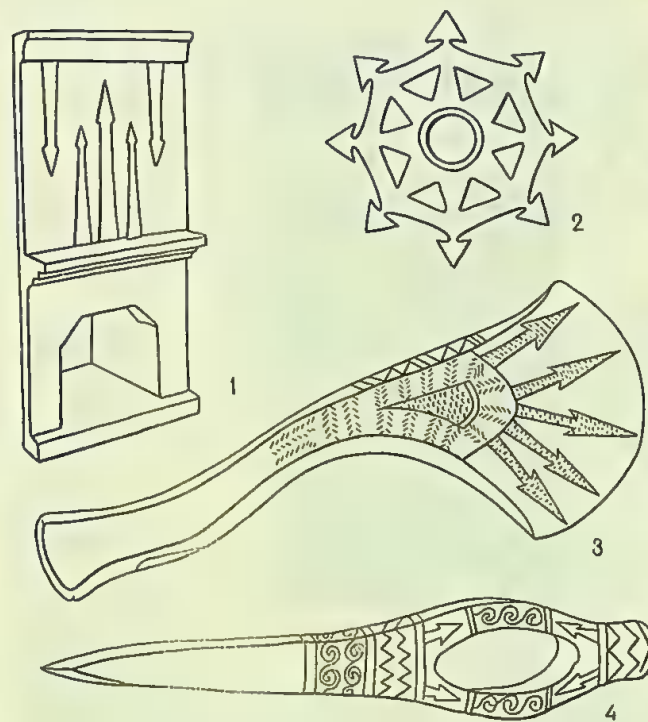


Fig. 39. Ray-arrows: 1 — moulding of a fireplace in Daghestan, Karanay-Aul, ca 1990; 2 — relief on a mosque wall in Daghestan, Tsurayi; 3, 4 — axes of Koban culture, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 4, p. 17].

symbolized a male deity. In the epochs which followed, the spear and arrow were associated with the images of Eros, Mars, and St. George. These deities, whose images were previously connected with Neolithic religious observances, could be afterwards paralleled to the vernal sun.³⁵

Ancient interments sometimes contain an object which looks like a bronze disk with a handle. It resembles a mirror of the type used by ladies; however, it was once a bronze replica of the sacred emblem in the form of a disk on a pole (Fig. 40: 7). This emblem was very common and had an important function in Europe and Western Asia. Slavs and Western European peoples practised a ritual of setting up a pole with a wheel on top of it on certain festive days. According to Herodotus, Scythians, when sacrificing a horse, tied it to a pole crowned with a wheel [270, p. 72]. The pole symbolized the World Tree.³⁶ The pole with a wheel on top could be perceived as a representation of the World Tree crowned with a sun. But such a symbol already existed in the Neolithic, when it must have represented the World Tree with the top reaching high into the sky. The World Tree was taken to be an embodiment of the Great Goddess³⁷; the disk on top of it symbolized the sky, the goddess' sphere. In Russia, during some popular festivals, a pole crowned with a wheel used to be set up, or a female dummy fixed to a pole was carried about; this shows an association between the female image and the wheel. This association resides in the fact that the goddess was looked upon as

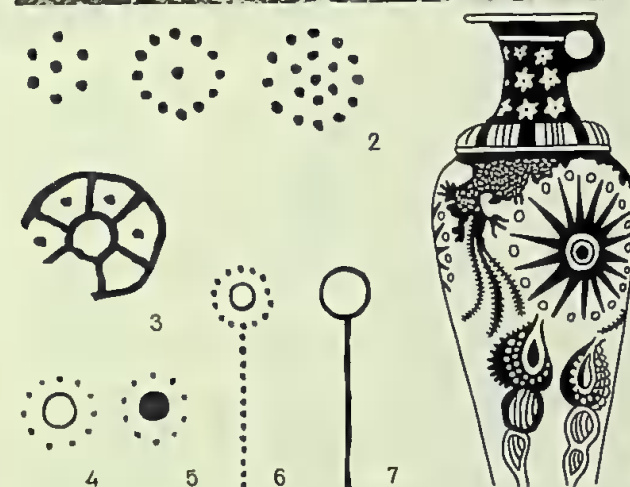


Fig. 40. Ring of dots: 1 — Daghestan, Turag, wall masonry; 2, 3 — Daghestan, rock wall paintings, ca 2000 BC, near the settlement of Anada (near Rugudja) and settlement of Chinahita (near Sogratli); 4, 5 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [701, figs. 85, 90]; 6 — Greece, 1000–700 BC [248, fig. 75]; 7 — Siberia, Bronze Age [400, p. 170]; 8 — Ancient Crete [676c, p. 509]; 9 — Russia, 18th c. [308, p. 152]; 10–12 — Baltic region, 5th c. [693, p. 18]; 13 — Iran, ca 2000 BC [691, p. 82]; 14 — Greece, ca 800 BC [248, fig. 75].

the mistress of heaven, the wheel being the heaven symbol. The pole with a wheel or a disk on top is an emblem of the Great Goddess — the major deity in the Neolithic religion. This is probably why the mace or the warder,

³⁵ See chapter "The White God."

³⁶ See chapter "The Tree of Life."

³⁷ See chapter "The Tree of Life."

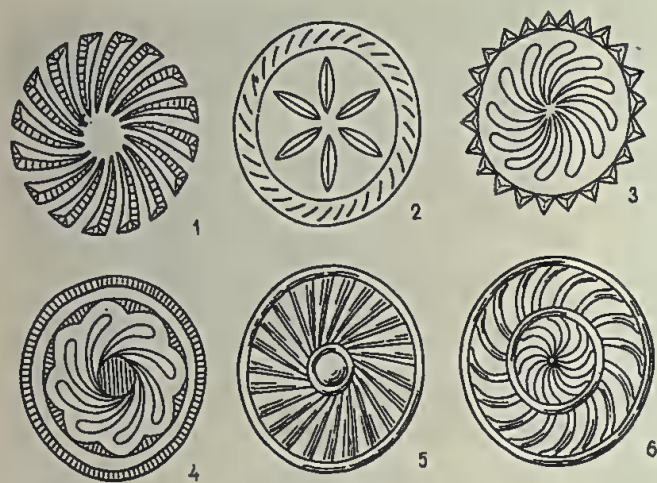


Fig. 41. Whirled rosettes in Daghestan: 1-4 — wood carving [358, p. 42; 562, p. 107]; 5 — stone carving, Isari; 6 — carved stone in a wall masonry, Barsha; 7 — grave stela, Dibgalik.

which resemble a rod crowned with an orb, have become symbols of authority.

As religious beliefs changed, this emblem acquired ■ solar meaning. Ancient depictions of a deer or an elk bearing this emblem (Fig. 63: 1) may be classified as solar in reference, for myths relate that deer or elk carry the sun.

Emblems of this type occur in the form of ■ disk fixed on ■ pole, the disk being encircled with dots (Fig. 40: 6). The disk surrounded with dots signified 'to shine' in the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic system [298, p. 229]. Rock wall paintings in Daghestan include representations of horses and riders in red surrounded by yellow dots; these may be divine beings emanating radiance or light.³⁸ Variants of rosettes are known with dots around the perimeter (Fig. 40: 9, 10), also suggesting that the circle of dots may symbolize the light of the sun. In Figure 40: 1, dots encircle a disk with ■ cross; this sign is believed to be a symbol of the sun.³⁹

Symbolic signs with circles of dots ■ frequently encountered in Daghestan (Fig. 40: 1-3). It is possible that these are solar symbols. The number of dots forming a circle varies, but it is usually twelve ■ six, most probably according to the number of months in the year or half-year. The Stonehenge cromlech includes twelve main upright stones arranged in a circle. It can be assumed that the numeral 12 designated the number of months in a year as early as the Neolithic, and the twelve elements forming a circle symbolized these twelve months. Vessels bearing twelve signs arranged in ■ circle ■ be interpreted as symbolizing the twelve months of the year [475, pp. 318-327]. The specialized literature usually attributes the numeral 12 to the number of months in ■ year and to the sun: "The number of recurring elements in the solar cult ornaments often amounts to 12. The sacred number 12 is involved

³⁸In Ancient Egypt, the sun was designated by ■ red disk outlined with ■ yellow circle [296, p. 229].

³⁹See chapter "The Sun Bird" for more detail.



Fig. 42. Whirled rosettes in decorative art of highland Caucasus: 1 — Chechenia, 18th c. [797, p. 36]; 2 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 108]; 3 — Georgia, 19th c. [512, p. 7].

in ritual practices associated with sun worshiping. The division of the year into 12 months has been expressed in all these traditions and rites" [137, p. 62]. It might be well, however, to point out that this statement is based not so much on evidence ■ on the fact that students have been carried away by the "solar cult" phantom: the number 12 is not necessarily associated with the sun. The month corresponds to the moon, not the sun, and if people divided the year into 12 months, this does not testify to ■ sun cult.

The sign in the form of ■ disk with a circle of dots was known ■ far back as the Paleolithic; there is no evidence of the existence of sun worship at that time. Dots encircle some cogged rosettes from Ancient Crete (Figs. 40: 8; 35: 4) where the religion, judging by available evidence, was connected with the pre-Indo-European cult of the Great Goddess, rather than with Indo-European sun worship. Taking into account our analysis of the semantics

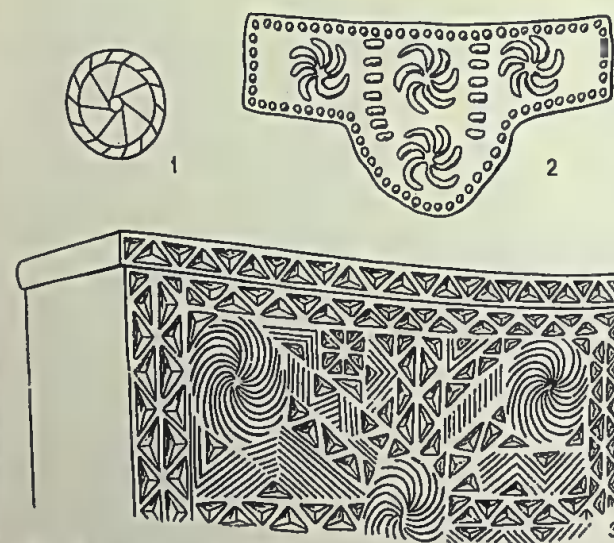


Fig. 43. Disk with angular or spiral rays, in Daghestan: 1 — design on ■ carved stone, Tidi; 2 — pattern on clay coating of ■ interior wall of a mosque, Ispik, ca 1900; 3 — pattern on ■ ceramic dish, Ispik, ca 1700; 4 — carved stone, Khushkada; 5 — carved stone on ■ façade of a mosque, Tsinal, ca 1940.

of the above symbols in their association with early farming cultures, it can be concluded that during the Neolithic period the circle of dots around a disk or a serrated wheel designated crops watered by heavenly moisture. This is why dots or little circles were located near the apexes of triangles which represented rain clouds (Fig. 40: 11), or at the end of lines designating rain (Fig. 40: 12-14). These dots could subsequently have had a different signification; they might have become ■ conventional representation of the light radiated by the sun, of sunshine.

It is noteworthy that the sign in the form of a circle of dots around the perimeter of a disk existed in the Paleolithic (Figs. 21: 6; 179: 2). But one cannot decide what it meant at that time.

In the decorative art of Daghestan and other regions of the Caucasus, rosettes with vortical designs are frequent (Figs. 41, 42). Whirled rosettes are encountered in Bronze Age ornaments from Western Europe to Central Asia (Fig. 34: 1-3). The vortexes in the rosettes are sometimes turned clockwise and sometimes counterclockwise. Mixed (double) vortical rosettes are also found (Figs. 41: 6; 26: 4). It is customary to assume that the vortical rosette symbolized the sun, justifiably insofar as rosettes can be considered solar symbols. However, there is no way of knowing either the specific semantics of this type of rosette or their origin.

One might suggest the following as origin of the vortical rosette. A burning revolving wheel was an element in ancient cult practices, to judge by the presence of this object in later popular rites. Flame tongue vortexes which form as the wheel turns round and round could have been the prototype for this symbolic design. However, this hypothesis is unsatisfactory, for there is a variety of vortical rosette whose origin can hardly be accounted for in this way — a disk with abutting spiral or L-shaped extensions (Figs. 43, 44). The spirals are sometimes variously directed, which cannot be the case with a vortex (Figs. 43: 2; 44: 6; 46: 6); occasionally plant-like elements adjoin the disk (Figs. 43:



Fig. 44. Disk with angular or spiral rays: 1 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646b, pl. 1]; 2 — Troy [663, p. 279]; 3 — Altai, ca 1900 [419, p. 234]; 4 — Armenia, Bronze Age [339, p. 48]; 5 — Troy [870, fig. 40]; 6 — Palestine, ca 100 CE [748, p. 405]; 7 — Ancient Peru [632, pl. 119].

1; 44: 6); or spiral-like extensions may abut on the inner rather than outer side of the circle (Fig. 44: 2).

Bronze Age artifacts include objects with ornamental decorations in the form of a disk with conventionalized spiral-like images of birds or snakes around the circumference (Fig. 45). The bird-sun association is inherent in Indo-European myths; the sun-snake association is harder to explain. But, in all likelihood, the birds and snakes depicted around the circle perimeter are a later improvisation on the theme of an older Neolithic motif of the circle with spiral extensions.

The vortical rosette emerged in Neolithic times; it is encountered in ancient Cretan artifacts [782c, Table 370]. Early farmers' ornamental designs include various graphic representations which seem to be prototypes of vortical

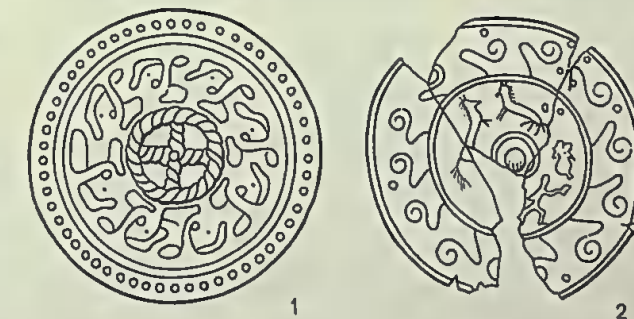


Fig. 45. Disk with birds or snakes on perimeter, Bronze Age: 1 — Hungary [719, p. 549]; 2 — Germany [830, p. 330].

rosettes and rosettes with spiral-like extensions around the circumference. Figure 46: 1 illustrates a motif composed of eight earth signs (see Fig. 15: 1-3 where this earth sign is present); Figure 46: 2 comprises six radially arranged water signs (cf. Fig. 46: 8) put together according to the same principle.

Pottery of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture sometimes displays a motif composed of a disk with adjacent curved lines (Fig. 46: 10). This composition may be understood as a symbolic representation of a cloud or of the sky pouring with rain. It is not clear why the rain jets should be coiled; this may be a compositional device, as in Figure 46: 1-3, or else there was a certain message it intended to express.

The designs shown in Figures 43-46 could have a bearing on the appearance of the vortical rosette. A design in Figure 46: 5 deserves particular attention. Although it dates from the nineteenth century, it belongs to the oldest type of graphemes which underlay rosettes with spiral extensions or vortical rosettes. This design can be interpreted as a conventionalized representation of a rain cloud and plants watered by heavenly moisture; the tendrils, as will

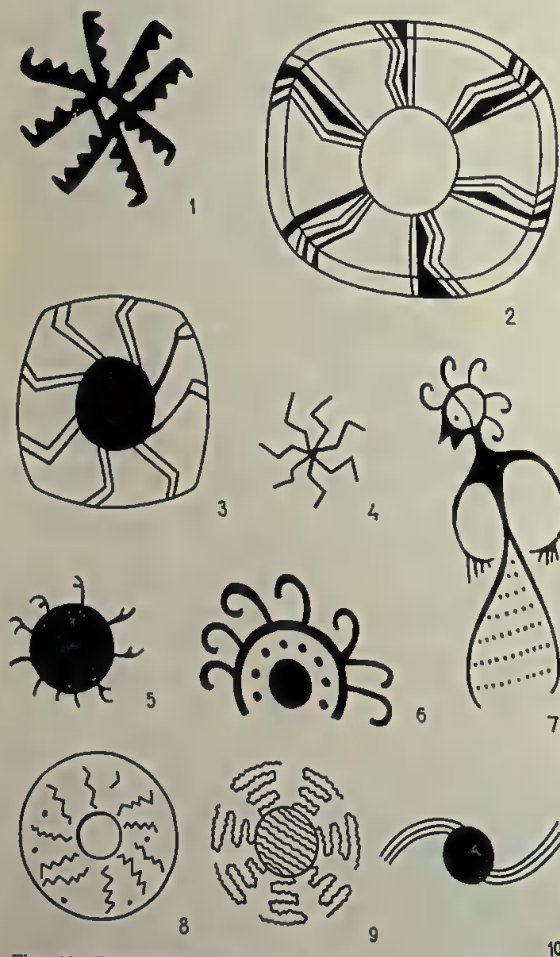


Fig. 46. Forerunners of whirled rosettes: 1-3 — Asia Minor, 6000-4000 BC [764, pp. 329, 389]; 4 — Greece, ca 1000 BC [719, p. 65]; 5 — Daghestan, ca 1900; 6, 7 — Cyclades and Crete, 2200-2000 BC [868, p. 142; 867, p. 275]; 8 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, p. 369]; 9 — Mesopotamia, Neolithic [755b, pl. 60]; 10 — Tripolye-Cucuteni culture [696, p. 170].

be shown later (Fig. 83), used to symbolize vegetation. Semantically, this picture corresponds to compositions of the type illustrated in Figure 36: 3, where there are hook-shaped plants next to clouds in the form of cogs; it may also fit other graphic variations on the theme "heavenly moisture irrigates plants" (Fig. 16).

To support the contention that the disk with coiled elements around the perimeter designated the sky or a cloud and plants watered by heavenly moisture, a Neolithic example can be cited, shown in Figure 46: 6. Here the disk with a dot in the center is a symbol of the sky going back to the Paleolithic, while the circle and the ring composed of dots is the area under crops watered by rain, the spirals designating vegetation.

Figure 46: 7, which reproduces a Cretan design, depicts a goddess whose head is treated as a disk with coiled extensions. These spirals are neither hair nor snakes. This heaven goddess' head looks like a symbol of the sky (see analogies in Figure 388: 1, 7). Another Cretan design shows the goddess' figure with a vortical rosette for the head (Fig. 323: 2).

It appears, then, that two series of compositions preceded the vortical rosette design: a) the disk with adjacent coiled extensions designating plants watered by heavenly moisture (or created by the heaven goddess); b) the disk with spiral instead of radial lines designating rain. In both cases the vortical rosette is the heaven symbol. That this grapheme did have such a meaning can be attested by the following example. Images of a bull's head with a vortical rosette on the forehead can be found (Fig. 73: 7); in ancient symbolism, which can be traced to Neolithic beliefs, the bull's head is often coupled with a sky symbol (cf. Fig. 73: 1-10).

Thus, one should not interpret circular or disk-like signs as having a single meaning: they expressed a range of notions, depending on the epoch or ethnic environment. The Daghestan rosettes may have been solar symbols, for they are analogous to corresponding diagrams typical of the ornamentation/symbolism of Indo-European peoples; the latter, as suggested by mythological evidence, venerated the sun as a deity. Yet both Daghestan and Indo-European symbols are quite similar to Neolithic ones. It cannot be ruled out that Daghestanian symbolism reflects religious practices going back to the Neolithic, and its similarity to ancient European symbolism is the similarity of offshoots of a single root.

In many cases it seems impossible to class a particular sign with a particular cult symbolism. For example, the image in Figure 47: 1 could designate both the sun and a cloud (or the sky). In actual fact, there are instances among these signs which are obviously solar symbols with rays on one side (Fig. 26: 9); others may represent a corresponding motif from the early farming period, which designated a cloud (or the sky) and rain (Fig. 26: 6, 7). The mutual correspondence of these sometimes wholly identical designs is an indication that the Neolithic image was adopted during the Bronze Age.

There is no way of knowing the specific semantics of the signs shown in Figure 47: 3 from their general appearance, for the reason that they survived thousands of years (from the sixth millennium B.C. to the nineteenth century)

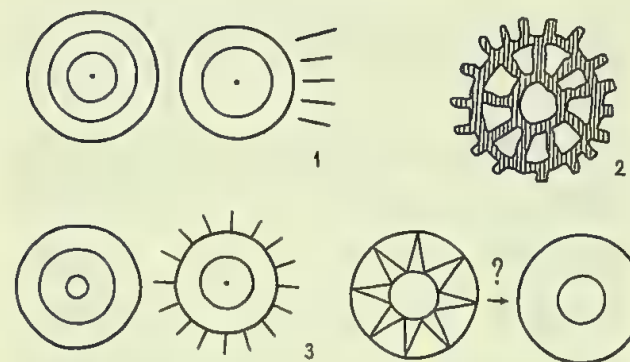


Fig. 47. Symbols with concentric circles: 1 — incising on a wall stone of a house, Daghestan, Dzilebki; 2 — rock wall painting near the settlement of Chinahita, Daghestan; 3 — Northern Black Sea region, Classical Antiquity [426, p. 135, 153]; 4 — Ancient Egypt [296, p. 229].

without having changed. The symbol shown in Figure 47: 2 is a doubled heaven sign; this is a version of the Great Goddess' binary emblem; true, the people who actually executed this design on the rocks of Daghestan might have seen it as a solar emblem.

Representation of the sun by concentric circles, quite common in ancient times, is in itself meaningless; this is a Neolithic sign of a cloud (or the sky) to which a solar meaning was attributed. As a matter of fact, according to one assumption, the solar sign formed by two concentric circles resulted from a simplified design of the cogged rosette (Fig. 47: 4) [296, p. 229]. However, this does not account for cases (which in fact prevail) when the solar symbol consists of several, rather than two, concentric circles. Besides, the sign of two concentric circles existed long before the cogged rosette appeared — as far back as the Paleolithic [703, Table 95]; it probably meant the double sky.

Sometimes the sun (if it is really the sun) was shown by a spiral design (Fig. 48). The probable origin of the spiral sign is a simplified way of drawing concentric circles was discussed above. The diagrams shown in Figure 48 are of recent origin (17th-19th centuries). This might suggest that they designated the sun. However, the "rays" in Figure

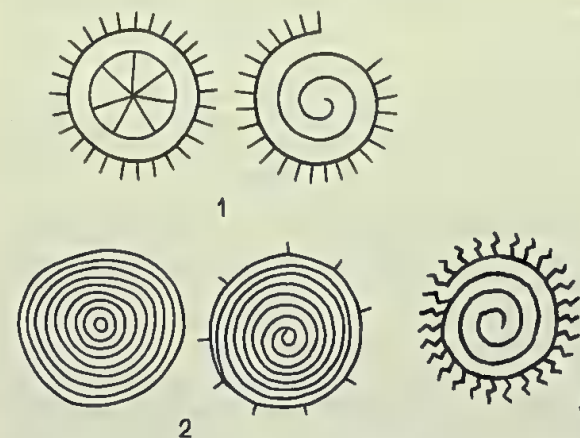


Fig. 48. Concentric circles and spiral: 1 — Chechenia, Middle Ages; 2 — Buryat, ca 1900 [418, p. 229]; 3 — Ingushetia, Middle Ages [89].

48: 3 are zigzags. The zigzag is the water sign. Therefore, the entire grapheme is the symbol of the sky pouring with rain (cf. Fig. 46: 8). There is no evidence for the function of the design made in the late Middle Ages. By that time it was probably no longer associated with any specific conception, but was simply a traditional emblem.

A circle with a dot in the center was a widespread sign encountered in the hieroglyphic writing of both Egypt and Ancient China [222, p. 147]. It used to represent the sun in ancient Oriental astronomy (apparently under Egyptian influence). Yet this does not necessarily mean that the sign was always and everywhere a solar symbol.

B. Piotrovsky [422, p. 10] and A. Miller [360, p. 4] thought that it derived from an eye image. It is true that ancient idols were frequently portrayed with round eyes, usually with a dot in the center, sometimes also with rays around the perimeter. But if so, why should eyes be represented in such an odd manner? Probably, this pattern derived from the image of the celestial body and not vice versa.

The Rig-Veda calls the sun "the divine eye" [778b, p. 655]; in Greek mythology the sun was compared to an eye of Zeus, and in Norse mythology to the eye of Odin/Wotan [829b, p. 37]; the Egyptians called the sun and the moon "the eyes of Hor" [422, p. 10]; the Romans had "the eyes of Jupiter" [514, p. 234]. All this testifies to a semantic connection between the concept "eye — heavenly body" and the sign in the form of a circle with a dot inside. However, other examples of this sign suggest that its origin and semantics could have been different. The symbolism of early farming cultures often employed an element in the form of a circle with or without a dot, sometimes two concentric circles. It follows from examples in the preceding chapter that such designs symbolized swollen seed (Fig. 12: 3). In the Paleolithic, as mentioned above, a circle with a dot symbolized the sky; this was sometimes also the meaning of the sign in Neolithic symbolism. Thus the sign of a circle with a dot, used in the Neolithic to designate in some cases seed, in others the sky, and in still others the "heavenly eye", became a solar symbol in the Bronze Age. It also became a symbol of fire. This can be confirmed by the presence of the sign on a 5th to 4th century B.C. implement for procuring fire found in Central Asia [122, pp. 28-32].

Little is known of symbolism among the ancient Kurgans (Fig. 414), a Proto-Indo-European ethnic group. Yet, some rather scanty information pertaining to the subject matter of this chapter can be derived from Kurgan relics. For example, disk, ring, and spiral signs are found on the pottery produced by this culture (Fig. 49). The signs on



Fig. 49. Ring and spiral among Proto-Indo-European tribes: 1, 2 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 2500 BC [285, p. 109].

Kurgan pottery may be interpreted in different ways. They could have been assimilated from early farming tribes with the semantics preserved, or these Proto-Indo-Europeans could have adapted them to their beliefs. They could have been borrowed merely as an ornament. There is no evidence so far for preferring any particular assumption. One thing is certain: these graphemes were borrowed by bearers of the Ancient Kurgan culture from neighboring early farming tribes (or from tribes they assimilated, who had previously inhabited the northern Black Sea region). This is undoubtedly the case, because such signs on objects manufactured by early farmers are numerous and older, whereas on Kurgan artifacts they are rare and more recent; besides, the Kurgan tribes adopted them upon coming into contact with early farming tribes.

Thus, at a certain stage of ancient cultures, and in certain religious systems, rosettes could symbolize the sun. People portrayed the sun not only because they saw it in the sky. Art in ancient times was not meant as imitation of nature; its purpose was to express particular ideas. The sun was considered a deity. There is much evidence that the sun was venerated not just as a heavenly body, but as a divine being [501]. Therefore, rosettes were not merely representations, — they served as ideographs of religious conceptions.

Joseph Déchelette, an early twentieth century French archeologist, who did not possess the data now available, once suggested that the sun cult owed its existence to the agricultural nature of the economy [658a]. This opinion became a formula regarded as absolute truth. S. Tokarev, a student of the history of religion, writes concerning veneration of the sun by ancient Slavs: "This was undoubtedly a popular agricultural cult, the sun being worshiped as an impregnator of earth and a provider of the harvest" [521, p. 112].

However, in ancient Western Asian and Eastern Mediterranean countries (Iran, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece), where the sun god was worshiped, the sun was by no means the giver of the harvest, but rather its destroyer. Furthermore, according to available data, sun worship was not necessarily associated with farming. The Kurgan tribes, whose cult practices would later be assimilated by their sun-worshipping Indo-European successors, had an embryo kind of agriculture; they were mainly cattle-breeders. North American Indians worshiped the sun, though they were not farmers, not even cattle-breeders, but hunters. Early farming Neolithic tribes of Europe and Western Asia, on the other hand, were not sun worshipers. The sun was venerated, although as a minor deity, by ancient civilizations of Sumer, Babylon, India, and China. In Egypt, the sun cult imposed by Akhnaton gave way to indigenous religious practices. As regards Russia, where sun veneration is believed to have been a "popular cult," the population was clearly suspicious of the sun. A Slavic expression can be translated as "May you be struck by the sun." This suggests that the sun was pictured as foreboding evil. The Russians were aware of the adverse effect of solar radiation on man: on hot summer days men worked in the fields with their shirts on, not even rolling up their sleeves, and women covered their faces with kerchiefs.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century mythologists formed a hypothesis that a sun cult was characteristic

of Indo-European paganism and that it was universal in nature. This theory was based on limited material — the mythological evidence of Ancient Greece and Iran and to some extent Ancient Egypt. More recent studies, however, have shown that sun worship was not universal in antiquity [371b, p. 461]. Nevertheless, outmoded concepts of the "solar cult" are still adhered to as a truism by scholars dealing with mythology and religious observances.

Generally speaking, sun cult in the full sense of the notion, i.e., worshiping the sun as a supreme deity, existed only in the Inca empire, in Peru. The sun was also worshiped as a deity in ancient Central American civilizations, by various Indian tribes, by the Japanese, Ainu, Mongols, and ethnic groups in Siberia. Why not assume that it was from these regions, outside the territories populated by early farming tribes, that the cult conceptions which suppressed the Neolithic religion spread?

Elements of sun veneration can be detected among peoples whose language is or used to be of the Indo-European family, although not all in the category display an equal degree of these features, if at all.

The Hittites, the most ancient among the nations speaking Indo-European languages who have left written monuments, do not particularly strike one as sun worshipers. They had hymns addressed to the sun, a sun-god is occasionally mentioned as presiding over gods' meetings; however, this god is powerless and lacking in distinctive individuality. The sun goddess is somewhat livelier, but she likewise played no significant role in the cult. The following from a Hittite text may bear witness to the significance of the Hittite sun goddess: "The king in a standing position bows to the thundergod, he does not bow to the sun goddess" [29, p. 62]. At the same time, other deities of obviously non-Indo-European origin are much more spectacular in Hittite mythology. Although the Hittites spoke an Indo-European language, their beliefs were in fact a continuation of the pre-Indo-European tradition. The Hattian language, i.e., the language of the pre-Hittite, non-Indo-European population of Asia Minor, was used by the Hittites for religious purposes, evidently because the Indo-Europeans who settled there assimilated local religious practices.

The Rig-Veda is one of the earliest literary monuments enabling one to judge the religious attitudes of the ancient Indo-Europeans. However, a considerable admixture of the non-Indo-European element is present in it. It still remains to be specified which of the beliefs and myths in the Rig-Veda are essentially Indo-European. Much of what is commonly classified as characteristic of Indo-European culture was borrowed by ancient Indo-European tribes from earlier farming tribes. Besides, the Rig-Veda dates from a relatively late period — 12th to 11th centuries B.C., when both the Aryans and their beliefs had been largely assimilated on local Indian ground.

Many Rig-Veda hymns glorify the sun personified by two male deities — Sūriya and Savitar, the distinctions between them being unclear.⁴⁰ There is also a female sun deity, Sūryah. This goddess must be borrowing from

⁴⁰ A probable pre-Indo-European origin of Sūriya and Savitar is discussed in the chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers."

early farming mythology where, as will be shown, the sun was personified by a female deity. Mitrā, a major god of the Rig-Veda, inhabited the sky; however, there are no grounds for drawing parallels between him and the sun.

As for the Iranian Mithra, it would be erroneous to define him unambiguously and unqualifiedly as a sun god. On the contrary, having emerged "out of a rock," he started a combat with the sun. Persians personified the sun in the image of Mithra only during the period of Classical Antiquity. One should perhaps ascertain whether sun veneration existed in Ancient Iran earlier, and if so, what its expression was. In any case, the Iranian Mithra was not originally associated with the sun [783, pp. 347, 348]. In the Avesta (the book of the sacred writings of Zoroastrianism), there is only one mention of him as appearing in the east and disappearing in the west; however, he is not positively identified with the sun [829, p. 381].⁴¹ The epithets "full of his own shine" or "radiant," applied to him in the Avesta, are not sufficient proof of his solar identity; they may characterize, for example, a heaven deity, a deity of daylight, or even a hell deity. Mithra is characterized in the Avesta as "bestowing rain," ruling over waters, ensuring prosperity, all features of the pre-Indo-European underworld god who was pictured as fiery and who among other things could rise to the sky. The Zoroastrian Mithra is armed with a spear and arrows and rides in a chariot; this makes him look like other ancient warrior- or thunder-gods. In Zoroastrianism, he is attributed the role of a fighter against evil, a severe god punishing the unrighteous. In the course of time the Iranian Mithra turned into a sun god; this was an expression of the solar cult which emerged in Western Asia in the post-Neolithic period and developed further in the second to first millennia B.C.

The ancient Greek sun god Helios is in fact merely a mythologized personification of the corresponding natural phenomenon; he did not play a conspicuous role in the religious, ethical, or ideological concepts of the Greeks or in their cult practices. Helios was portrayed as a man with rays around his head, riding a chariot drawn by white horses. During the Classical epoch, Apollo was identified with Helios and gradually supplanted him. As can be seen from Apollo's characteristics, his origin was other than Indo-European and he was not originally a sun deity.⁴²

The Romans did not actually worship the sun. Ancient sources mention a deity named Sol, which means 'sun'; altars were sometimes dedicated to him/her, but this deity never played any marked role in the cult. A notion existed among peoples of the Ancient East that the sun was an "all-seeing eye"; this was probably why the rulings of the senate in Ancient Rome were valid only when pronounced while the sun was in the sky [818, p. 100]. The sun cult in Ancient Rome gained in strength during the empire, in all probability under the influence of the cults of conquered peoples. There was also a strong influence from Iran whence the worship of Mithra, referred to as "invincible sun," spread to the Roman Empire.

⁴¹ An ancient myth whose echoes have been preserved in the legends of different peoples features an episode in which the underworld god appears in the sky in the east, and retires to his abode in the west; see chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers."

⁴² See more on Apollo in chapter "The White God."

A medieval Russian chronicle mentions a deity named Dažbog with an epithet "the sun king." Nothing, however, points to the existence of sun worship among Slavs. Russian and Western European medieval written sources list other names of major deities of Slavic paganism. Slavic folklore attests a certain deferential attitude towards the sun; however, it contains no evidence of a sun cult. S. Tokarev, an author who has tried to reconstruct the characteristic features of the Slavs' pre-Christian religion, writes: "Traces of the ancient notion regarding a solar deity are hardest to find. We do not even know for sure which of the names of ancient Slavic gods perpetuated by monuments were associated with the sun" [521, p. 111].

Roman sources provide a brief account of the beliefs of the ancient Celts; they make no mention of a sun cult. Nothing points to sun worship by ancient Germanic tribes; neither do German medieval chronicles or folklore point to any traces of a sun cult. Mythological data, some popular beliefs and rites, as well as folklore, indicate that Indo-Europeans indeed showed respect for the sun, but there is no evidence of sun worship.

Let us now turn to what may be learned about sun deities in the Ancient East.

In the Sumerian pantheon, the sun god Utu occupied a minor position. For the pragmatic Sumerians Utu was closer to man than to the supernatural powers. A Sumerian hymn reads: "Oh, Utu, shepherd of the land, father of black-headed people! When thou liest down, people, too, lie down. Oh, hero Utu, when thou risest, the people rise, too" [736, p. 42].

In Elam, according to a text dated in the 23rd century B.C., the sun god Nakḫunte occupied fifth place in the divine hierarchy [570, p. 44]; his specific characteristics are not known.

Ancient Semites had the goddess Shamshu as an incarnation of the sun (the Arabs used to venerate her among other deities before they adopted Islam). At the end of the fourth millennium B.C. Semites appeared in Mesopotamia, and there this goddess was merged with the Sumerian sun god Utu, which led to the appearance of the Assyro-Babylonian sun god Shamash. His image was associated to a much greater extent with human practices than with the action of cosmic forces; he was considered an inspirer of legislation. His significance grew in the course of time; every Mesopotamian city had a temple dedicated to him. Despite all this, Shamash never achieved the position of a major deity. It is likely that the ancient Semites associated the notion of the sun with the concept of its practical, utilitarian role, rather than with its awesome divine nature; this may appear in the fact that the Hebrew word *šamaš* ('servant') derives from the same root as the word *šemeš* ('sun').

In Ancient Egypt sun veneration was not always strong in the thousands of years of the country's history. The ancient Egyptian nation was formed in the fourth millennium B.C. as a result of a mixing of various tribes; ancient Egyptian religious beliefs display the influence of the religious and mythological attitudes of the Western Asian Neolithic early farmers. The Pyramid Texts dating from the second half of the third millennium B.C. reflect the Egyptian religion as already considerably confused; as centuries passed, it

became more complicated.

The oldest Egyptian solar deities include Tum or Atum (the sunset deity) and Hepri (the rising sun deity). The universal sun god Rā appeared later.

The *Pyramid Texts* identify Rā with Hor (Horus in the Greek and Horus in the Roman tradition). Originally, however, Hor was not a solar deity. His usual symbol is the image of a falcon; an oval (as we have seen, designating the sky) was drawn over the bird's head (Fig. 50: 4). Publications on ancient Egyptian history and religion do not hesitate to refer to this sign as a solar symbol, though some doubts should have arisen: this oval "sun" looks rather strange in shape, with inward cogs around the circumference and a snake (regarded as an enemy of the sun) accompanying it.

The combination of this sign and a bird image does not necessarily bespeak the nature of the deity which the bird represented, since the same sign was placed over the heads of other Egyptian gods as well, designating holiness. Available written documents provide more specific information on Hor. In accordance with texts dating from the First Dynasty, i.e., the beginning of the third millennium B.C., Hor's wings are the sky and his eyes are the sun and the moon [680, p. 37]; Hor was commonly referred to as "the lord of heaven." The hieroglyphs for Hor sound (without the vowels) *hr*; and *hrt* in the language of the ancient Egyptians meant 'the sky,' -t being the feminine suffix [767, p. 66]. Interestingly, images of two falcons are encountered in the First Dynasty; this may be paralleled to the doubled heaven symbols. A design from Asia Minor done in the sixth millennium B.C. depicts a bird which resembles an Egyptian representation of Hor within an oval (Fig. 50: 3), and in this culture the oval, as established

in the preceding chapter, designated the sky. B. Rybakov lists several examples which point to an etymological connection between the Slavic deity Hōrs, whose name is consonant with that of Hor, and the Greek and Slavic words meaning 'circle' [475, p. 434]. N. Marr correlated the Latin *orbis* ('circle') with the Egyptian *hrt* ('sky') [335b, p. 317]; this is further evidence that Hor was the heaven god and that the circle symbolized the sky.

Thus, Hor was the heaven god. Unlike the Neolithic Great Goddess, he was not a universal deity of nature; his sphere was confined to the sky. The intricacy and the multi-stage character of the ancient Egyptian religion is expressed in the fact that, in addition to the heaven god Hor, the Egyptians worshiped the heaven goddesses Mut, Hat-hor, and others.

In the early second millennium B.C., Hor continued to be depicted as a bird, either seated or with extended wings (Fig. 50: 1). A different representation also appeared, a conventionalized one, in the form of a winged disk. It is noteworthy that the disk in the earliest examples of this symbol looks like a sky sign going back to the Neolithic, rather than like a representation of the sun (Fig. 50: 2). The eight-petal rosette in this design corresponds to the eight-pointed star within the winged disk in other examples, this latter star symbolizing eight directions of the horizon (four main and four intermediate). The winged disk is sometimes placed over the World Tree [773, Table 11], symbolizing the sky which, according to myths, rests on this tree's crown. Wings are occasionally attached to a pair of disks (Fig. 78: 4) which seem to represent a double symbol of the sky. The winged ring (and not the disk) was one of the sacred symbols used by the Druids [865, p. 115]. We are justified, then, in believing that the winged disk was originally a symbol of the sky rather than of the sun.

Priests among adherents of the solar cult declared Hor, popular in Egypt, to be "a grandson of Ra, a companion of Ra" and even Ra himself. In the first half of the second millennium B.C. Hor acquired the significance of a sun god; later he became identified with the Indo-European rider-god.

The origin of the Egyptian sun god Ra is not clear. A text from the First Dynasty substantiating the divine origin of the pharaoh's rule does not mention Ra [680, p. 26]. The name Ra appears for the first time in the titles of pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty (27th century B.C.). The hieroglyph in the form of a disk with a dot, which read *rh* and designated the sun, came into being during the same period.⁴³ Earlier ancient Egyptian graphemes in the form of disks or circles (Fig. 50: 5) should not be associated with the sun; they are obviously heaven symbols.

As early as the Sixth Dynasty (24th century B.C.) Osiris came to the fore as a major Egyptian god, supplanting Ra. In order to provide support for the latter, priests of the sun cult identified Ra with deities popular in Egypt — the heaven god Hor, the bull-god Apis, and the ram-god Amon. In the 15th century B.C., the Pharaoh Akhenaton undertook an enterprise, which failed, to establish the cult of a sun god named Aton.

⁴³The word *rh* designated 'sun' in the ancient Egyptian language.

S. Mercer and E. Budge, who studied the history and religion of Ancient Egypt, have pointed out that the cult of Ra appears to be extrinsic to Egypt [767, p. 124; 640, p. 167]. It is, however, impossible to find out whence it could have been borrowed, because sun worship is not known outside Egypt in the 27th century B.C.

The name Rā for the sun is not confined to Egypt alone; it was known in China and even in Polynesia; in Adyg languages the words for 'sun' are *amrā* and *terā*. The following considerations may be suggested concerning the etymology of the Egyptian name Ra in an effort to ascertain the origin of this deity. In the ancient Egyptian language *hrt* stands for 'sky,' *rt* for 'snake'; **horā* in the Nostratic language means 'to arise.' Perhaps, Ra was initially the fiery serpent of the underworld which rose to the sky? Or was he part of the underground fire which rose to the sky as the sun? Egyptians imagined the setting-sun deity Atum as a serpent. Some ancient Egyptian texts attribute an aqueous nature to Ra and allude to his association with the primordial ocean [669, p. 110]. Rod (=rt?) is the progenitor of mankind in ancient Russian mythology. In ancient Greek *orfne* means 'darkness,' *oros* — 'mountain,' *roa* — 'stream, spring' and 'wine,' all these being attributes of the earth god. 'Earth' is *'erec* in Hebrew, *urta* in Sumerian, *Erde* in German. The Turkic underworld god's name was Erlik or Yer-Sub. The Egyptians visualized Ra as a cow shepherd, a common function of the underworld god. *Ro'eh* is the Hebrew for 'shepherd,' and *ra* means 'bad, evil.' In this connection it is appropriate to recall the Indo-European **reh* for 'king, ruler.' Ra is the ancient name of the Volga, rivers being associated with the earth god. In Sweden, Ra is a multiple-function demon. The English *rat* not incidentally sounds like the name of the ancient Egyptian sun god Ra: the mouse, which, as will be shown later, was associated with the underworld, was considered Ra's sacred animal. The mouse was also regarded as sacred to Apollo who, like Ra, was initially a god of the underworld and then became a sun god (this will be discussed later).

The cult of Ra was promoted by the priests of Heliopolis. The first pharaoh to take the title "son of Ra" was the founder of the Fifth Dynasty (26th century B.C.), himself from priestly Heliopolis stock [640, p. 164]. The *Pyramid Texts*, characterized by the worship of Ra, profess hostility towards popular Egyptian gods, such as Osiris, Hor, Seth, and Isis [766b, pp. 30-31]. The troubled 18th—17th centuries B.C. were marked by a decline of the Ra cult. Then Queen Hatshepsut (16th century B.C.) put an end to the pharaohs' tradition of calling themselves sons of Ra and proclaimed herself the daughter of Amon. At the same time, the serpent Apop, the enemy of the sun god, was deified [767, p. 55]. Thus, in the middle of the second millennium B.C., the sun cult in Egypt, after centuries of gradual decline, was finally defeated.

In view of all this, A. Formozov's opinion that a sun cult spread to the wide expanses of Eurasia from Egypt [533, p. 42] appears erroneous. Formozov's opinion is also contradicted by the fact that the sun cult, allegedly borrowed from Egypt by India and Greece, did not affect the religious beliefs of the western Semites — immediate neighbors of the Egyptians, to say nothing of the fact that there was no sun cult in Greece, or in India, and in Iran

the sun became an object of worship a thousand years after the cult had disappeared in Egypt. Besides, traces of sun veneration observed in deep strata of European popular tradition can hardly be considered reflections of the Egyptian cult which was not even consolidated in Egypt itself.

An assumption exists that fire worship is proof of the existence of a sun cult. This opinion, however, needs to be verified. It is quite true that popular beliefs and ancient mythology associate fire with the sun. For example, the Babylonians placed earthly fire and the sun together, and the Finns considered the fire deity to be the sun's son [565, pp. 73, 74]. An Ossetian cult name for fire is *art-huron*, meaning 'fire of the sun' [2, p. 11]. Fire and the sun are listed together in the Edda. In medieval Russia, fire was called Svarozhich, which means Svarog's son, while the sun was referred to as "the son of Svarog." The above, however, does not necessarily mean identifying fire with the sun; it can be accounted for by the fact that in Neolithic mythology the sun was considered an offspring of the underworld god, fire being his attribute. Other facts mentioned above may be attributed to secondary associations, or to survivals of a myth picturing the sun as a fragment of underground fire that temporarily rose into the sky.⁴⁴ Numerous data indicate that the veneration of fire and the role played by it in cult practices have nothing to do with the mythicism of the sun and do not attest to the existence of a "sun cult."

It has become customary in the literature to accept as self-evident that fires built during summer and winter solstices symbolize celestial fire — the sun. This judgement may seem justified for yet another reason: it was a custom to set fire to a wheel atop a pole or to roll a burning wheel downhill. It might appear natural that a burning wheel should symbolize the sun. But let us scrutinize these data from a different point of view.

The disk mounted on a pedestal or on a pole was a symbol of the sky, as was shown above. The rite of building fires, in particular of setting fire to a wheel, was not restricted to solstice festivals; it was also performed on days not associated with the solar cycle: Easter holidays, St. George's day, etc. In Ancient Rome, the Vestal fire was renewed on the first of March rather than on the day of the vernal equinox. Fires were built during rituals connected with the worship of Talipinu, a Hittite deity who had nothing to do with the sun.

Ritual fires were lit not only on certain festive occasions, but also in cases of distress, probably in order to propitiate the god embodied in the fire and regarded as the source of the calamity. It was considered expedient to burn nine different wood species in the ritual fire, and nine persons participated in the operation [588, p. 709]; the number nine was associated with the underworld god.⁴⁵ It was furthermore considered useful to rotate the implement for deriving fire by friction with the help of a rope previously used in a hanging (this was most likely due to the fact that human sacrifices by strangling were offered to the underworld god). The tree intended for the ritual fire was

⁴⁴See chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers."

⁴⁵See chapter "Stars."



Fig. 50. Pseudo-sun in Ancient East: 1 — Egypt, ca 2000 BC [774, p. 261]; 2 — Syria, ca 2000 BC [773, pl. 11]; 3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764, p. 329]; 4, 6 — Egypt, 2000–1000 BC [347, p. 40; 774, p. 394]; 5 — Egypt, ca 3200 BC [795, pp. 75, 53].

to have been felled by twin brothers (divine twins, as will be shown, were considered sons of the underworld god). In ancient times, it was common throughout the Mediterranean, from Sardinia to Judea, to light a fire in the home of a deceased; this was done because earlier fire was once regarded as an attribute of the abode of the dead. The Bible states that sacrifices offered to God must be burned, since "the food of fire is a sacrifice to the Lord"; this is obviously a reflection of the tradition dating back to the time when the underworld god, the sovereign of fire, was worshiped as the Lord.

The Hittite ritual of burning sacrifices and the fire cult generally belong to a pre-Hittite tradition [191, p. 270] in which there was no sun worship. Fire was revered as holy in Zoroastrianism, a cult which did not involve sun worship.

A major Vedic god, the fire god Agni, has no solar connections whatever.⁴⁶ There is a relationship between Agni and fire, on the one hand, and the solar cult, on the other, in Brahmanism; however, this is a secondary phenomenon which does not conform to the Vedic tradition. Only once does the Rig-Veda call Sūriya "Agni in heaven" [614, p. 29], but as a rule these gods are repeatedly and consistently referred to as separate deities [397a, pp. 681-685].⁴⁷ Moreover, Agni is associated with water, not with the sun, which is quite understandable, if one sees in Agni a pre-Aryan god of the lower universe (earth, ground waters, and underground fire).

European and Caucasian peoples had a custom of jumping over fire, walking through fire, and driving herds through fire on certain festive and ritual occasions; this custom also existed in Ancient Rome.⁴⁸ In a similar custom, herds were driven over a canvas [247, pp. 29, 34] — the white cloth being an attribute of the Neolithic goddess⁴⁹; it can be concluded from this that the above rites had their origin in Neolithic religion.

The heaven goddess' male partner in that religion was the underworld god embodied in the serpent, as will be shown repeatedly [198, p. 137]. Ancient Greeks performed a "fire dance" on the summer solstice, with a line of dancers meandering like a snake [790, p. 235].

The fire of the underworld is an incarnation of the "lower world's" lord. For this reason it is customary among Jews to keep a steady fire burning in the house of a deceased for a week; fire is also lit on the anniversary of the death. The concept of the underworld god as the spouse of the heaven goddess gave rise to the ritual of burning a wheel; it symbolized the joining, the union, between the god and the goddess. The underworld god, as will be shown, was considered an incarnation of the male sex drive; hence probably the image of fire as a poetic symbol of love. The underworld god was believed to have prophetic faculties;

⁴⁶ See chapter "The Black God."

⁴⁷ The words "Agni in heaven," attributed to Sūriya, probably mean that the sun is a particle of the underworld fire which got to heaven.

⁴⁸ All these rites may be regarded as symbolic tribute to the deity incarnated in fire. In Greek myth, Achilles and Demophones acquired immortality by passing through a flame; this may be understood as follows: the god who was a source of death "got his share."

⁴⁹ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

pagan Lithuanians, like ancient Greeks, took it for granted that the holy fire presaged one's fate through the priest's mouth [829b, p. 579]. The underworld god was considered immortal, eternal — hence the ancient custom among various peoples to maintain perpetual fire in their temples. The mythicized fire is invariably called "living," "eternal". The Rig-Veda calls fire "immortal" [397a, p. 14]. A Russian fairy tale credits Kašči with immortality; judging by the characteristics of this personage, he is the underworld god transferred from myth to the fairy tale.⁵⁰ In France, charred pieces of wood and coals from bonfires burned on summer solstice festivals were preserved as a defence against disastrous fires and lightning [228c, p. 23]; but lightning is the fiery serpent, the underworld god who rose to the sky. The time-honored Russian custom of making the sign of the cross when a burning candle is brought into a room or on hearing thunder, is based on the worship of the fire and lightning deity, rather than of the sun god. In Russia of old, fire was called *bogač*; the Ukrainian for bonfire is *bahattya*; if these words originate from *bog* ('god'), this must be because fire was considered an embodiment of the deity; if they are related to the word *bogastvo* ('wealth'), this is because the infernal serpent possessed countless riches.

These examples show that fire was considered an incarnation of the underworld god rather than of the sun. He was a cruel and insatiable god who demanded endless sacrifices, including human. In 1800 a British farmer burned his best heifer in a bonfire, in order to protect his livestock from disease [228c, p. 73]; this was a relapse to the ancient custom of offering sacrifices to the underworld god embodied in the fire. Ancient burials discovered under fireplaces should be regarded as sacrifices offered to the god of the underworld and of fire: these burials took place soon after an area was occupied by settlers and exhibit striking features, such as a damaged skull, indicating a violent death, or the position of the body face down. Sacrificial offerings to fire, or at least burnings, are known to have been practised by Neanderthal man [707, p. 54]. The notion that the infernal ruler is of a fiery nature spread far beyond Europe and Western Asia, where it most probably first appeared: so, the death spirit Kaeshot in the mythology of the Aede Vietnamese ethnic group is visualized as fire (the Vietnamese Kaeshot and the Russian Kašči are undoubtedly variants of the same name).

Various factors might have led man to the decision that fire was an incarnation of the underworld god: 1) volcanoes eject fire and molten magma as a vivid manifestation of the fire element in the depths; 2) the sky glows with fire at sunset; this could be perceived as a gleam of infernal fire since it was believed that the entrance to the underground world was in the west; 3) the serpent was the most typical and common embodiment of the underworld god; lightning was imagined as a fiery serpent who rose to heaven from his underground abode.

The rite of committing corpses to flames is a specific manifestation of the fire cult. It was first practised in the third millennium B.C. by the pre-Indo-European populations of Europe and Asia, and was later picked up by

⁵⁰ See chapter "The Black God."

Indo-Europeans. This rite appears to have symbolized the departure of the deceased to the lord of beyond; it could be meant as a sacrifice to the god, so that the latter, satiated, would not look for new victims among the living.

There is nothing about these customs and beliefs to suggest that fire worship was associated with the solar cult.

S. Tokarev, an authority in the Soviet school of mythologists characterized by a rationalistic approach to folk rites and beliefs, explains the deferential attitude of the Russians to fire by the fact that "old, wooden Russia was always afire; village fires were a disaster which destroyed at one blow the results of the peasant's work of many years" [521, p. 67]. As though fire was revered only in Russia! It was venerated even more in Iran, where houses were built of mud and stone.

Fire was revered not because it was evil (destroying property and inflicting disasters) and not because it was benevolent (providing warmth, making it possible to cook food and work metals), but because it was an incarnation of a deity. And that deity was not the sun god, but the god of the underworld.

Why then should many peoples have pictured the fire

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

There is an old mosque in the Daghestanian village of Varsit dating back to 1771. The ornamental setting of one of its windows (Fig. 51: 1) is of interest. The design of two opposing semicircles resembles a similar motif in ornamental decorations of the Creto-Mycenaean culture of the second millennium B.C. (Fig. 51: 2). M. Gimbutas interprets such a grapheme as a representation of the Divided Egg [696, p. 102].

Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indian, Greek, Karelian, Chinese, and Polynesian legends have preserved an ancient myth of the creation of the world. According to this tale, the world originated from an egg laid by a serpent which dwelled in the primordial ocean, or the primordial waters created a cosmic egg from which the serpent emerged. The egg split in two, half of it became earth, the other half — heaven. In other versions, the egg was laid by a bird and split by a snake which hatched out of it.

In ancient times ideas could spread in one manner only — orally; this process had to be slow. If this myth of the creation of the world became known in parts of the world situated so far apart, it must be assumed that it emerged very long ago, in the earliest stages of human culture, probably as far back as the Paleolithic.

The fairy tale of the golden egg laid by a hen and broken by a mouse is a survival of the myth to our days. The personage responsible for breaking the egg is not fortuitous, for the mouse, like the snake, is a soil-dweller. The ancient Greeks believed that mice belonged to the same family as snakes [240, p. 152]. Mythological thinking among different peoples pictures the mouse as a chthonic animal. According to Pliny, Persian magi venerated mice as associated with a deity. In the course of time the underworld

deity as female (Roman Vesta, Greek Hestia, or the goddess of the fire and the hearth of Siberian and Far Eastern peoples)? Women were responsible for maintaining the fire in everyday life, and this could result in the notion of a mistress of the fire belonging to the lord of the underworld.⁵¹ Associated with this was the Neolithic mythological conception of the sun as a fiery woman who got to heaven from the underworld.⁵²

Indo-European mythology differentiates between two types of fire: feminine, symbolized by a circle, and masculine, symbolized by a rectangle [371a, p. 531]. It was found in studies of burial sites in Southern Tajikistan that the fire altar at male interments was square, at female round [317]. This symbolism becomes clear if one recalls that the heaven goddess was symbolized by a circle, and that the sun personified by the female deity in the Neolithic is also round, while the square was the Neolithic earth god's symbol.⁵³

⁵¹ This is probably why in Jewish custom women light ritual candles, despite the fact that women do not usually figure in Judaic cult rituals.

⁵² See chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers."

⁵³ See chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."

god transformed into the devil, so that a number of legends and popular beliefs call the mouse the devil's creation, refer to it as an incarnation of Satan, and regard it as an impure creature [371b, p. 190; 521, p. 54]. The underworld god was also a thundergod; the mouse image was therefore associated with the thunderstorm phenomenon [371b, p. 190]. Mice, like other creatures related to this deity, were attributed prophetic aptitudes [240, p. 190]. The expression "the mountain begot a mouse" reflects the concept that the mountain is the abode of the underworld god. The ancient belief that the mouse is in touch with the devil is the reason why some people still now experience horror on seeing a mouse, as if it were a viper before them.

The serpent in the ancient mythology of various nations appears as a stable image of a creature representative of earth, of a ground mass the interior of which encloses the imaginary nether realm of the devil — the hell. Hence an attribute of the spring pagan holiday dedicated to the revival of the spirit of growth — the egg, the symbol of the serpent, the earth deity, which together with the goddess is a parent of vegetation and of all living things. The church had to reconcile itself to this, as to many another pagan custom, and in the fourth century introduced the rite of consecrating Easter eggs.

Russian fairy tales allude to an association between the serpent and the egg; in one popular belief a rooster lays an egg from which a fiery serpent hatches [527, p. 89]. In a Greek myth, the serpent Typhon was born from an egg; an egg-shaped stone in the Delphic temple was considered Typhon's coffin (cf. "Kašči's death within an egg"). In Yugoslavia, the first egg dyed for the Easter holidays was called "the guard of the house," while in Europe, Western



Fig. 51. Opposite semiovals: 1 — carved stone window framing of a mosque, 18th c., Daghestan, Varsit; 2 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [821, p. 105]; 3 — Denmark, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 327].

Asia, and the Caucasus the serpent was believed to be the guard of the house. Druids made magic egg-shaped tangles from snakes; these shapes were called "snake eggs" [864, p. 99]. Jews in olden times had the following custom: when a child was first brought to school, he was given an egg to eat "to cultivate his mind and strengthen his memory" (the underworld god was regarded as a patron of learning, knowledge, trades, and sciences) and he then was led to a river (rivers were associated with the underworld god).

An Indo-European name for 'egg' is etymologically connected with a name of the nether realm's god. Indeed, the Old German *ege*, *aki* meaning 'horror' correspond to the English *egg*; naughty children in England used to be frightened into behaving properly by "ogres." Ogre must be the same as the Russian *ogon* ('fire'), ancient Indian Agni, and ancient Greek Ogen or Okeanos (the ocean was part of the underworld god's element).

The serpent appears in the role of creator of the world in the creation myth. Moreover, he was reputed to be the patron of fertility (what led to this concept will be discussed elsewhere). The egg thus became a fertility symbol. Slavs wishing to ensure better crops used to scatter Easter-egg shells over their fields, or they rolled an egg over the ground before starting to till [855, p. 125]. Ossets and Russians put an egg into seed prepared for sowing, or

buried an egg in the sown area [582, p. 122].

Archeological excavations in settlements of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture revealed female figurines modelled from clay with an admixture of seed and cast into fire [63, p. 134]. This magic rite probably meant that the union between the heaven goddess and the earth god embodied by fire was expected to breathe life into the "spirit of the seed," i.e., to promote crop growth. It did not matter whether the seed came into contact with fire or with an egg. Semantically it was the same, for the fire and the egg were attributes of the earth god.

People believed that the Easter egg possessed magic properties and could affect the harvest, cause an increase in livestock, and promote childbirth [228b, p. 213]. The serpent, according to beliefs from ancient times preserved as superstitions until the twentieth century, was an incarnation of the impregnating male power; therefore, in order to attract men, women washed their faces during the Easter holidays with water into which an egg dyed red had been put [228b, p. 261]. The Greeks believed that eggs could excite sexual desire [225, p. 39].

Authors advocating rationalistic interpretations of folk rites and beliefs hold that the magic significance of eggs lies in the fact that living beings hatch from them; the egg, according to these authors, symbolises the conception of life. This point of view might seem supported linguistically: the Nostratic **muña* ('egg') sounds very much like the Nostratic **mān* ('man') and **mina* ('woman'), which suggests the conclusion that the notion of the egg was associated with the idea of conception. However, popular beliefs and rites exist which do not fit this point of view. The Easter egg in Russia was believed to be instrumental in extinguishing fire and in finding hidden treasures [310, p. 127], evidently because the serpent was considered the lord of the fire and the keeper of treasure. In Ancient Greece, the egg was an attribute of both marital and funerary rites [225, pp. 38, 39], for the underworld god, like his spouse the Great Goddess, was the source of both life and death. In Russia and Western Europe, dyed eggs were placed in graves [310, p. 133; 229b, p. 153], because the deceased were on their way to the lord of the hereafter. In ancient Sardinia and among the ancient Hebrews the feast after the funeral included eggs. Jews have by now forgotten the former symbolic significance of the egg, yet certain chthonic associations are still alive; they come down to the notion that the egg rolls like a wheel of destiny, reminding us that we are all mortal.

Rudiments of the concept of the semantic association between the egg and the snake, having survived thousands



Fig. 52. Painted Easter eggs: 1—3 — Lithuania [693, p. 30].

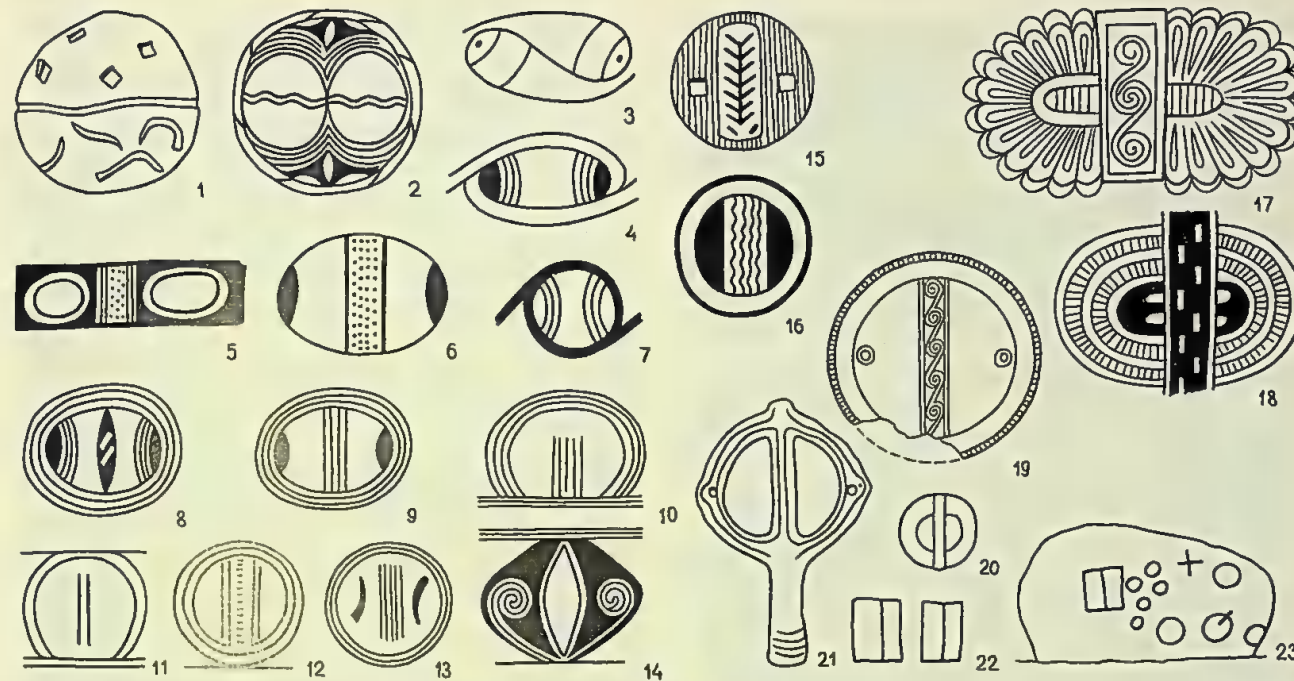


Fig. 53. O-shaped sign: 1 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, p. 372]; 2—14 — Ukraine, Bessarabia, Rumania, 4000—2000 BC [696, pp. 102-114; 75, p. 51]; 15 — Elam, ca 3000 BC [383, p. 210]; 16 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [488, p. 207]; 17, 18 — Crete, ca 1500 BC [676c, p. 591; 696, p. 168]; 19 — Armenia, ca 1500 BC [170, p. 103]; 20 — Hittite hieroglyph "divinity"; 21 — Siberia, ca 500 BC [578, p. 150]; 22 — Ukraine, ca 1500 BC [532, pl. 13]; 23 — France, ca 2500 BC [659, p. 591].

of years from the earliest period of the history of human culture to our own time, can be discerned not only in popular rites and beliefs, but also in folk art. Painted Easter eggs not infrequently feature a serpent image. Figure 52: 3 shows an egg divided into halves by the image of a serpent and a diametral line. One half of the egg depicts a symbol of the heaven goddess, the disk with rays, the other half a crescent, the earth god symbol.⁵⁴ Figure 52: 2 illustrates the same theme: on one side of the serpent is a symbol of the heaven goddess, a disk with dots around the perimeter; on the other side — the earth god symbol, the crescent.

Enigmatic spherical shapes made of clay found in excavations of Troy most probably represent the Cosmic Egg (Fig. 53: 1; one half of the surface of the sphere appears to portray the star-studded sky, the other half — the earth with plants). Of interest in this respect is the design on a Neolithic vessel from France shown in Figure 10: 1. On the face of it, it may be taken for sunrise: the visible part of the heavenly body is portrayed as a half-disk with rays, and the hidden part is designated as in modern mechanical drawing by dotted lines. However, there is no evidence in the Neolithic period of indicating an unseen part of an object by dotted lines. More likely, the design had a different content: it illustrated the concept of two halves of the universe.

The divided-egg motif appears in numerous versions in

⁵⁴See chapter "The Bull-Moon."

the ornamental art of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture (Fig. 53: 2-14). V. Bogayevsky, who once took an interest in this type of design, thought it depicted a seashell [75]. B. Rybakov criticizes this as erroneous [468a, p. 24], suggesting instead that such designs were symbols of fertility derived from the shape of the female sex organ. However, it is impossible to accept this latter interpretation: many of the signs by no means corroborate such a supposition.⁵⁵

The egg was divided by the action of the serpent, and this is reflected in symbolism/ornamentation. Pottery of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture sometimes bears a double-egg image cut across by a serpent (Fig. 53: 2). Popular in ancient Cretan ornamentation was the motif of two semi-rosettes or semiovals; its semantics can be interpreted in different ways, including the divided egg; in Figure 53: 18 the design is halved by a serpent image. The serpent in Neolithic symbolism was often designated by an S-shaped design; therefore, two semi-rosettes could be divided by this sign (Fig. 52: 17).⁵⁶ The egg (whose shape changed into a circle) could also be divided by a plant sign semantically associated with the image of the earth deity (Fig. 53: 15). Finally, as the serpent represented water as well as earth, the disk ("egg") could be intersected by a water sign (Fig. 53: 16).

The composition of a disk intersected by a serpent symbol continued to play the role of a sacred emblem during the Bronze Age (Fig. 53: 19). The Hittites used it as a hieroglyph for 'deity' (Fig. 53: 20). The O-shaped symbol, which first appeared in the Neolithic period [659, p. 588, Fig. 9], retained the significance of a sacred sign

⁵⁵Signs of the female pubis look somewhat different (Figs. 146, 248, 375).

⁵⁶M. Ryndin offers his interpretation for the two semi-rosettes design: "Shod horses running away from flies" [477, Table 59]. Any unclear pictorial representation may be deciphered in such a manner, if one relies solely on his own fantasy, or unduly trusts his informers.



Fig. 54. Opposite semiovals: 1, 2 — carved stones, ca 1900, Daghestan, Kujnik; 3, 4 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [825, p. 306; 248, fig. 68]; 5 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC [69, pl. 14]; 6 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [265, p. 41]; 7 — Rumania, ca 3500 BC [666, p. 29]; 8 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC [532, pl. 13]; 9 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [631, pl. 249]; 10 — Russia, Middle Ages [485, p. 112]; 11 — Chechenia, ca 1700 [367, p. 49].

in the first millennium B.C. (Fig. 53: 21). This symbol, as well as the sign in the form of a halved rectangle (Fig. 53: 22), which also emerged in the Neolithic period (Fig. 53: 23), were common during the Bronze Age in the territory from Western and Eastern Europe to Iran [533, p. 198; 716, p. 73].

There is evidence suggesting that the meaning of these graphemes was based not only on the myth of the creation of the world from the split egg.

An ornament is encountered on Neolithic pottery consisting of an arrangement of paired triangles (Fig. 51: 3), which seems to be a simplified reproduction of paired semiovals. It suggests that these graphemes could symbolize not only the divided cosmic egg, but also the goddess' dual nature. The two meanings of these symbols closely approach and even partially overlap: the duality of the Great Goddess could imply that, as the goddess not only of heaven but of all nature, she was present both in heaven and on earth.⁵⁷

In addition to the design of paired semiovals (or semicircles, triangles, and rectangular brackets) with their convex shapes facing in opposite directions, there existed a design in which pairs of the same elements had affronted convex parts. Such a motif of facing semiovals was observed in Daghestan (Fig. 54: 1, 2). A similar design, though in a more conventionalized form, was also discovered in another locality of Southern Daghestan [282, p. 261].

The design was known from Neolithic times in Western Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Caucasus. It may appear in different versions. Semiovals with affronted convex portions, like semiovals with the convex portions facing in opposite directions, may be arranged to form sequences (Fig. 54: 6) or pairs (Fig. 54: 3, 4). In many cases they are inscribed in a rectangle (Fig. 54: 8, 9) or in a circle (Fig. 54: 10). Sometimes they are transformed into square brackets (Fig. 54: 7, 11). The variant of an arc with knobs at the tips (Fig. 54: 5) must be the result of mutual influence and confusion of semantically dissimilar signs — bull's horns (Fig. 67: 8) and facing semiovals. Or this example may be interpreted as an indication that a pair of opposing arcs could designate two lunar phases — the new moon and the waning moon (the moon was depicted as the horns of a divine bull, hence the knobs at the crescent's tips).⁵⁸

The motif of opposing arcs with facing convexities could hardly illustrate the divided-egg myth: such a transformation of the design does not lend itself to explanation. Still, some kind of association exists between the two types of symbols: in some designs from Tripolye, facing arcs are drawn inside the Φ -shaped sign (Fig. 53: 6, 8, 9). At the same time, the design composed of a pair of semiovals with facing convex surfaces has a meaning different from that of the pair of semiovals bulging in opposite directions. While the latter of these two symbols seems to express the concept associated with the myth of the creation of the world from the cosmic egg which split in two, the former is apparently a double sign of a cloud, i.e., a doubled emblem of the heaven goddess. (The possibility exists,

⁵⁷The problem of the "dual goddess" will be discussed in more detail.
⁵⁸See chapter "The Bull-Moon."

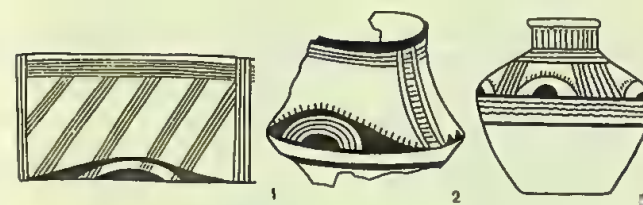


Fig. 55. Conventional designation of sprouting seed: 1, 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni culture, 3000—2000 BC [468a, p. 41; 858, p. 49]; 3 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [858, p. 49].

however, that these are two crescents — the new and the waning moon).

In some cases a pair of semiovals may be interpreted as a doubled earth sign.

B. Rybakov adduces a design from Tripolye, which he deciphers as "sown seed watered by rain" (Fig. 55: 1). This interpretation seems to reflect the true semantics. A similar design from Tripolye may be construed as "crops are coming up" (Fig. 55: 2). Another version of the same motif uses a semioval (Fig. 55: 3). If this sign is an earth symbol, the design consisting of two such elements (Fig. 56: 4) must be a doubled emblem of the earth god. Doubled earth symbols probably decorate the Neolithic vessel from Upper Mesopotamia shown in Figure 56: 5, because the grid, as will be discussed later, was an earth symbol schematically representing the earth divided into plots. Another possibility is that a network similar to a grid served as a symbol for the heaven goddess, and therefore the two semiovals shaded by grids could be a doubled sign of her.

The semantics of this doubled symbol of the earth, resembling a "half-sun," parallels the semantics of the doubled heaven symbol of opposing arches. Other graphemes also express the notion that the earth god can be present not only "beneath," but "above" as well (Fig. 294: 7).

Two Neolithic vessels, one from Asia Minor, the other from Tripolye (Fig. 56: 1, 2), bear designs of the same type. The ornamental band is divided into zones which designate alternately: a) rain (as a series of vertical zigzags in Figure 56: 1 and arcs, the reduced version of the rain-cloud sign, in Figure 56: 2); b) the sky above and the earth below (see fragments "A"). However, two facing semiovals representing conventionalized heaven—earth relationships are uncommon. It usually looks like a pair of heaven signs (Fig. 56: 1, fragment "B") or a pair of earth signs (Fig. 56: 4).

Thus, in the Neolithic period there were symbols composed of two opposing semiovals, with facing or opposing convexities. During the Bronze Age, when other gods' cults took over, these symbols as well as others had to be revised to accommodate new beliefs. Circular figures began to symbolize the sun and semicircles or half-disks were logically taken as half-suns, particularly since these designs do resemble a half-sun in a number of cases. For example, the element we discussed (Fig. 55: 3) could easily be perceived as a representation of the rising sun.

The moment of sunrise was very important in ancient cult concepts. Stonehenge sanctuary in England, dating back to the 18th—17th centuries B.C., is oriented towards the point of sunrise on the summer solstice. Many ancient

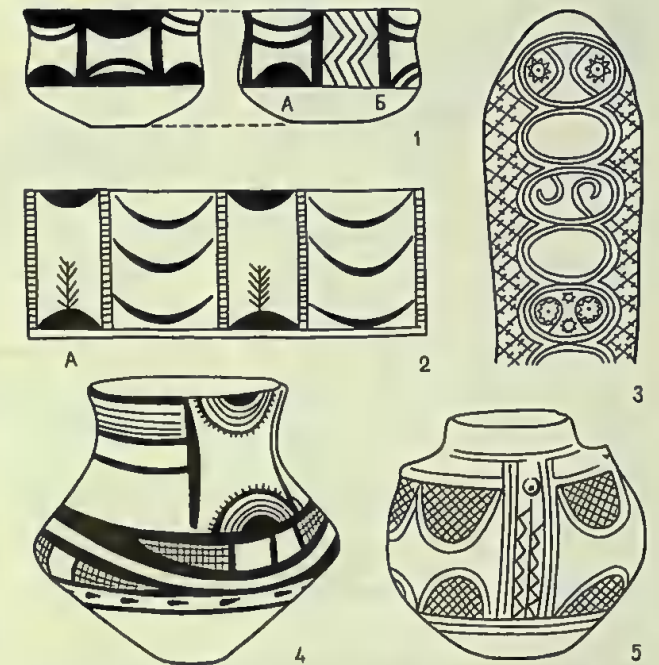


Fig. 56. Double pseudo-suns: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764, p. 311]; 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [468, p. 40]; 3 — Sicily, ca 3000 BC [676a, p. 21]; 4 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [412, p. 105]; 5 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [353, p. 165].

peoples used to practise the rite of welcoming the rising sun. A Georgian magic text reads: "When the sun comes out from behind the eastern mountains and all gods assemble before the sun god, then the rays of the sun chase away the evil spirits of sorcery" [482, p. 89]. Ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Caucasians built their temples and sanctuaries with the entrance facing eastwards, so that the rising sun could light up the interior through the open door. Siberian and Far Eastern nations, who worshiped the sun, regarded the eastern horizon as sacred [760, p. 35]. In accordance with an old pagan rite in Russia, "the people said their prayers and pronounced oaths facing east" [40a, p. 66]. The Ingushi ethnic group, likewise, looked east when articulating cult utterances ("oaths") [12, p. 357]. The following words occur in a Christian psalm: "Praise the Lord rising over the eastern sky" [662, p. 2]. Early Christians placed the cross on the eastern side of the font.

Other evidence, however, indicates that the west was also sacred in paganism. In the Bronze Age, some tribes buried their dead with their faces turned west, others — east. It would be useful to try to find out what types of pagan beliefs produced these concepts. When Christianity was arising, both of them existed in the region encompassing Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia. In most cases the western side was attributed sacred significance. Ancient Hebrews regarded the westerly direction as sacred. In Christian temples the altar was placed at the eastern end of the hall, and therefore, when a pagan temple was transformed into a Christian church, the altar was moved from the western to the eastern part of the building, and the entrance from the east to the west. In some old Christian temples the altar section is still directed westwards (in such a case the priest held services with his back to the apse).

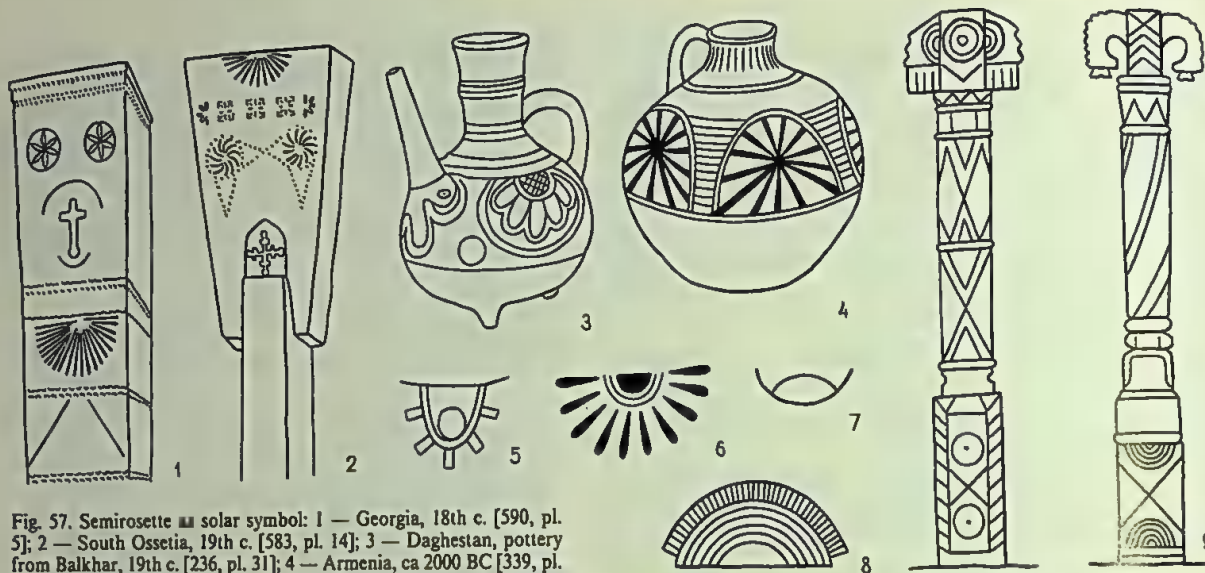


Fig. 57. Semirosette solar symbol: 1 — Georgia, 18th c. [590, pl. 5]; 2 — South Ossetia, 19th c. [583, pl. 14]; 3 — Daghestan, pottery from Balkhar, 19th c. [236, pl. 31]; 4 — Armenia, ca 2000 BC [339, pl. 22]; 5 — pre-Columbian America [657, pl. 26]; 6 — Ancient Greece [618d, p. 51]; 7 — Sumerian hieroglyph of the sun; 8 — Egypt, ca 2500 BC [774, p. 146]; 9 — Moldavia, 19th c. [459, pp. 53-56].

Ancient Indian texts refer to the setting sun as "dying." In ancient beliefs sunset was perceived as the sun's departure to the abode of the dead. Europeans, Egyptians, and American Indians [514, pp. 326, 327] believed that the entrance to the world of the dead was in the west.

Various peoples had a custom of burying their dead towards evening [726, pp. 134, 135]; it was apparently believed that the soul of the deceased passed to the other world together with the setting sun. In old England people used to say: "The deceased departs with the sun" [790, p. 271]. According to a Russian superstition, it was not advisable to sleep at sunset, probably in fear that the sun might mistake the sleeping person for a dead one and take his soul away. Similarly, New Zealand aborigines believed that a glance at the setting sun might cause death [671, p. 136]. The Kets oriented the front of their sledges to the east, and when a man died his sledge was turned to the west [153, p. 104]. In the Bronze Age, a deceased was placed in the grave on his back, usually head eastwards, not infrequently in a sitting position, i.e., with the face turned west, in order to allow his soul to follow the sun. This concept is quite old: the dead were faced west as far back as Mesolithic and Paleolithic times [780, p. 18; 733, p. 133]. Even today black gangs in the United States cut off their victims' heads and expose them facing west (the meaning of this old custom is now forgotten, and it is explained as facing the killed in the direction opposite from Mecca). In ancient times, people faced west when offering sacrifices to the dead [662, p. 81]. The old popular belief that the west is associated with death is reflected in the English phrase *to go west*, meaning to perish, to be lost.

As the setting sun was considered to be dying, the Neolithic cloud sign of a "suspended" half-rosette could be perceived as a setting half-sun (Fig. 57: 1-3). An overturned object or an overturned image are known to have symbolized death in antiquity. Indeed, the sign of an overturned segment designated the setting of the heavenly body in the hieroglyphics of Ancient Egypt [296, p. 226].

The conclusion that the sign in the form of a "suspended" half-rosette designated sunset and dying gets somewhat unexpected support: a corresponding sign (Fig. 57: 5) is depicted on the garments of the ancient Mexican god of death. There is nothing really surprising about this analogy to European and Western Asian symbols in pre-Columbian America; examples of such analogies have already been given and more will follow below.

There was no cult of the dead in the ancient Indo-European system of religious concepts. On the contrary, the image of the setting sun which, though dying, will rise again tomorrow, was an incarnation of immortality, and this, in all probability, was the meaning of the sign of the setting sun: after setting, the heavenly body was expected to rise again the following day. This suggests that the sunset sign was an ideograph which expressed the idea that though the sun sets ("dies"), it will rise ("come back to life") again, so that the sign represented the concept of revival, renaissance, immortality. A hero in an Armenian epic "is endowed with immortality like the setting sun" [340, p. 73]. Consequently, the setting-sun sign must have served since the Bronze Age as the symbol of the deity's immortality rather than of death.

If the half-rosette is the sign of the rising or setting sun, a pair of half-rosettes should symbolize sunrise and sunset. This meaning of the symbol is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that it was positioned in designs like to a pair of suns (Fig. 57: 9). Incidentally, a symbol composed of two arcs inside a circle (Fig. 54: 10) figures (again in Ancient Mexico) on the garments of the sun god [657a, Table 26]; it therefore had a solar meaning. A combination of the two signs perceived as sunrise and sunset could be a more comprehensive ideograph of the deity's immortality as compared with the setting-sun sign alone.

In addition to graphic symbols, other evidence confirms the assumption that pagan cult conceptions comprised the idea of sunrise and sunset. For example, there is a pair of stelae in a medieval cemetery near the Ossetian village of Lats⁵⁹; one of the stelae faces east, the other west. Ancient

⁵⁹ Pagan beliefs survived in North Ossetia until the nineteenth century, despite the adoption of Christianity.

Greeks welcomed the rising sun and saw off the setting sun; there are prayers in the Rig-Veda appropriate for addressing the rising and the setting sun. Oblong burial mounds of the third millennium B.C. in England run east-west [381a, p. 269]; they date back to the Neolithic, implying that even so long ago sunrise and sunset were associated with cult conceptions. Excavation of the tomb of an ancient Chinese emperor revealed two human skeletons immolated; one lay face up on the east side, the other, face down on the west [715, p. 62].

The symbol made up of two square brackets enclosing a cross (Fig. 58), known both in the Old and New Worlds, may be an ideograph meaning "morning, noon, evening". In some contexts the cross designated the midday sun.⁶⁰ With this in mind, the combination of the cross and brackets (which can be regarded as reduced semicircles — cf. Fig. 54: 11) representing sunrise and sunset in this case, seems quite logical. This three-membered symbol corresponds to verbal expression of the mythological concept of the three daily phases of the sun. The Russian tale of Vasilisa the Beautiful mentions three riders — red, white, and black — which, in M. Khudyakov's opinion [575, p. 262], symbolize the

⁶⁰ See chapter "The Sun Bird."

rising, high noon, and setting of the heavenly body. The Egyptian sun god declares: "I am Hepri in the morning, I am Ra at midday, I am Atum in the evening" [347, p. 91]; these are the names of deities which represented the sun in its various phases.

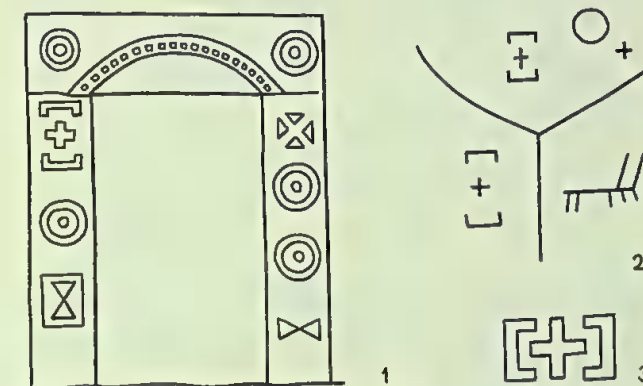


Fig. 58. Sign of cross between brackets: 1 — door framing, Daghestan, Kirtsik; 2 — engraved stone, Chechenia, Galanchoj [90, p. 5]; 3 — ornamental element, North American Indian [750, pl. 29].

THE DEER WITH THE GOLDEN ANTLERS

Many deer antlers have been found in pagan sanctuaries of the highland regions of Checheno-Ingushetia and North Ossetia; in some cases the structures themselves were decorated with deer antlers. Apparently, the deer image once had a certain significance in the cult conceptions of the inhabitants of these areas in the Northern Caucasus. Deer antlers were sometimes portrayed in the carpet patterns and embroidery of both the mountainous and steppe areas of the Northern Caucasus (Fig. 59). The deer image is common in ancient and early medieval Eurasian art, and it is a popular personage of myths and legends.

Some authors are inclined to consider the deer theme as specific for the cultures they study. For example, G. Wilke treated it as essentially Indo-European, A. Okladnikov as Siberian-Russian. Yet, it was known to American Indians [835, p. 282], as well as to early Neolithic (seventh millennium B.C.) inhabitants of Asia Minor [762]. What then caused such popularity of the deer image in old art and traditions?

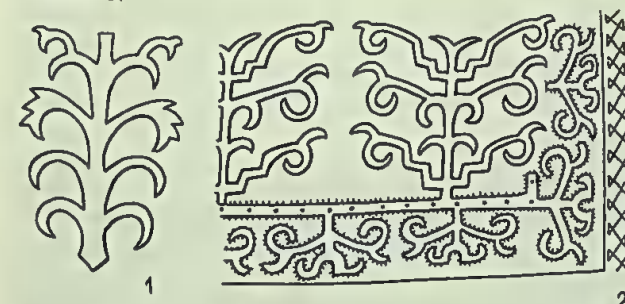


Fig. 59. Deer antlers in Northern Caucasus ornamentation: 1 — Ossetic [574, pl. 11]; 2 — Daghestan, Nogayan.

If free artistic activity had existed in the ancientest history, artistically gifted individuals could have portrayed the beautiful animal and made up legends about it out of purely aesthetic feelings. However, "pure art" was alien to the cultures which preceded civilization.

The deer image could also have occupied a conspicuous place in human imagination because this animal was an object of hunting. However, judging by statistical data on bones found in archeological excavations of Paleolithic and Mesolithic stations and Neolithic settlements, a certain animal could gain popularity in the representational art and the cult practices of ancient epochs not necessarily in proportion to its economic importance. Paleolithic art has not left portrayals of all animals which were in fact hunted. On the other hand, creatures with no real significance for human life (the owl, the frog) were not infrequently depicted.

A Paleolithic cultural layer up to five meters deep was discovered in the Regurdou cave in France. It revealed a certain pattern, an extraordinarily stable one, covering millennia, in the course of which deposits accumulated to the depth of five meters. Large quantities of animal bones were ritual burials with an "absolute predominance of bear bones, the deer occupying second place; other animals accounted for a minor admixture in the bone material" [508, p. 156]. At that time the bear was no longer a major hunting object, other animals were also hunted; why then did other animals account for a minor admixture?

Subsequent epochs are also characterized by a lack of agreement between utility and art. For example, farming and cattle-breeding were of first-rate economic importance

in the Neolithic, yet these occupations are very seldom reflected in the art of that period. The deer was venerated in the Jewish tradition; but it never had any marked significance as a hunting object on the territory of Palestine. Another circumstance is noteworthy: if deer images or scenes of deer hunting in ancient art were due entirely to the fact that ■■■ used to hunt the animal, how can one account for scenes of deer being attacked by predators — ■ motif just as common ■ hunting?

Hunting deer was in fact a significant activity during Mesolithic and Paleolithic times. There can be no doubt that it ■■ then (we do not know for sure when exactly) that the deer hunting myth first appeared. The myth was inspired, however, by something else.

Was the deer a totem? Most unlikely. Though totemism existed in Australia, Africa, America, and Oceania, this does not imply that it also existed in Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus. No traces of totemism have been discovered in this region, where the deer image is common in ancient art. Moreover, if deer images were associated with totemism, this would have meant that nearly the entire population of Eurasia regarded the same animal as a totem. F. M. Müller in his time justly objected to the interpretation of mythological images as totems and pointed out that references to totemism, animism, fetishism, etc., without proper substantiation, create ■■ more than a semblance of an explanation [778a, pp. 8, 199].

The majority of authors studying the "deer theme" in ancient art agree that the deer image was of cult significance [67, p. 4]. It is, however, not quite clear in what the corresponding cult conceptions consisted.

B. Rybakov offers the following treatment of this motif in his works on the mythological image of the deer [469; 470]: hunting for deer was of great economic importance in the Mesolithic period; human fantasy created a belief that the deer killed by hunters were the offspring of a divine mother deer; she, being divine, was placed in the heavens. Some traditions mention two supernatural mother deer, which in B. Rybakov's opinion ■■ present two generations of mythical progenitor mothers. This interpretation of the myth seems to have some foundation, but it does not agree with many facts which require other interpretations. H. Sicard, in a work dealing with the image of the Wonderful Deer [835], lists interesting information, but his conclusions do not follow from the material he discusses. In his opinion, horned animals, including the deer, symbolized the triumph of eternal life. This conclusion is supported by an argument that the deer was occasionally portrayed in combination with the Tree of Life. But other animals too, either horned or without horns, as well ■■ birds, men, and sphinxes, are with equal frequency encountered in the same combination; further, the Tree of Life is by no means ■■ symbol of "eternal life." Generally speaking, it ■■ biblical, i.e., a relatively more recent, term, implying the mythical World Tree.

W. Hartner [711] came to the conclusion that the theme of ■■ deer attacked by ■■ predator in ancient Mesopotamian art was an allegorical allusion to the beginning of springtime work in the fields; that was the time (in early February), when the Deer Star (the constellation Cassiopeia) disappeared beyond the horizon, whereas the constellation Leo

was in the zenith, and the images in question symbolized the "victory of the Lion over the Deer".⁶¹ But perhaps, conversely, the constellations were named after heroes of a myth already in existence? Besides, if the scene of the deer being killed by a beast is associated with this astro-nomical fact, the motif of man (or ■■ man-like creature) hunting the deer remains unexplained. Yet this second variant is rather common in myths and pictorial representations.

A. Okladnikov proposes a version according to which Siberian peoples considered the elk ■■ image of the universe [400, p. 58]. To begin with, this does not explain why the elk image was given such significance. Moreover, it is wrong, disagreeing even with the data quoted by Okladnikov himself, namely, that the elk was considered an incarnation of the lower universe, i.e., earth and the underground, rather than the entire universe. The elk or deer, representing the lower world, were at the same time associated with the sun and heaven, but this has another explanation, which will be discussed later.

Let ■■ try to interpret ■■ scene where a deer is chased by a predator or an anthropomorphic creature, as depicted in ancient art, and correlate data which make certain judgments possible about the essence of the deer cult image in Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus. Of course, when

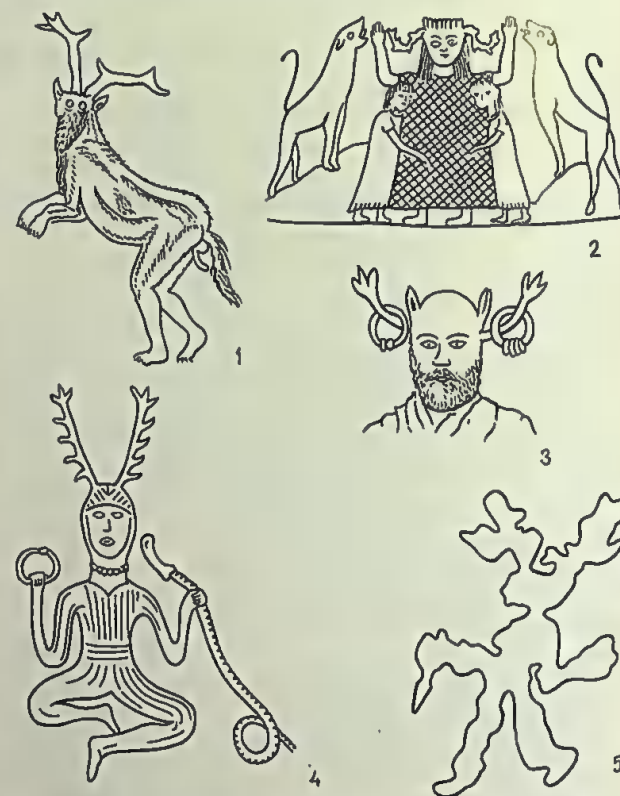


Fig. 60. Mythical creatures with deer antlers: 1 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 275]; 2 — Greece, ca 800 BC [719, p. 65]; 3 — Celtic, ca 100 CE [858, p. 119]; 4 — Denmark, ca 100 CE [744, pl. 146]; 5 — Northern Italy, ca 2000 BC [612, p. 213].

⁶¹ The relationship between the constellation Cassiopeia and the image of ■■ deer existed not only in ancient Mesopotamian myths: in a Lapland legend recorded in the 20th century, the stars of Cassiopeia represent ■■ deer pursued by ■■ hunter [400, p. 83].



Fig. 61. Daghestan representations of hunt scene: 1 — Katrukh [141, p. 110]; 2 — Khushtada; 3 — Tidib [140, p. 102].

the myth spread over such a vast area, it varied from place to place; it also changed in the course of time; however, its fundamental meaning remained constant.

The deer image began to undergo mythologization as far back as the Paleolithic; the myth proper must have taken shape in the Mesolithic or earlier, and judging by the fragmentary ancient beliefs which have reached us, it was an essential part of the religious conceptions of Neolithic early farming cultures. It underwent transformation during the Bronze period, and the related legends and rites were later maintained merely by force of tradition.

There is ■■ Paleolithic painting depicting ■■ supernatural creature with deer antlers (Fig. 60: 1) in the Trois Frères cave (France). Publications of this painting are usually accompanied by a caption: "Sorcerer" or "Shaman Wearing a Mask." This, however, is no more than an assumption. There is ground to understand the painting differently. It is situated in a higher spot within the cave, in a place difficult of access, dominating other images (animals) in the cave. If this is a shaman or a priest, the purpose of the painting is not clear. Could it be a self-portrait? Most doubtful. This creature resembles an animal rather than a man: its trunk is almost horizontal, the limbs and beard being the only human attributes. The eyes are drawn as in many anthropomorphic or theriomorphic images made prior to the Bronze period in Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus: in the form of circles with a dot in the center. It seems to be the image of a mythical, supernatural creature.⁶²

It is known from archeological evidence that deer or elk antlers did sometimes decorate priestly headgear. In all probability the priest was likened to a mythical creature in such cases.

The period of Classical Antiquity also produced anthropomorphic images of chimerical creatures with deer antlers (Fig. 60: 2-4), but these are not accounted for in written monuments. They are most certainly echoes of earlier cult conceptions.

Paleolithic cave paintings have been discovered in India, in the Madhya Pradesh State; an animal combining both deer and bull characteristics is frequent among them. Its recurrence testifies to ■■ certain stable mythological concep-

⁶² A Harappian seal shows ■■ human figure with bull horns, legs and a tail. It does not occur to anyone to specify it as a "shaman in disguise"; neither are Greek representations of satyrs with goat horns, legs and ■■ tail interpreted in that way.

tion. This is yet another confirmation for the assumption that the deer image was already mythologized as far back as the Paleolithic.

Immolations dating from the Late Paleolithic and the Mesolithic have been found in Northern Europe: deer procured by hunting were drowned in water. In some cases immolations were less wasteful: the head of the deer, rather than the entire carcass, was cast into the water. The deity to which these sacrifices were offered was probably believed to dwell in water [760, pp. 68, 121].

A living being was put to death for the sake of a mythical creature in two cases: if the former was considered an incarnation of the latter (for example, a bull or ■■ bear was killed and eaten as a form of worshiping ■■ deity perceived in the image of this animal) or if the former was regarded as a desired sacrifice for the latter (for example, maidens intended for a lascivious deity were killed, or children were put to death in order to pacify the deity which was believed to feed on human flesh). Nothing in the myths suggests that the deer was pictured as dwelling in water. At the same time, numerous traditions and pictorial representations relate that the deer could become ■■ prey. It follows from all this that the deer in myths of those times was specifically intended for sacrificing to ■■ certain creature inhabiting water.

The walls of sanctuaries of the Early Neolithic (7000 B.C.) Çatal-Hüyük settlement in Asia Minor sometimes bear images of deer and deer-hunting scenes [762, p. 134]. The scenes suggest some ritual activity, rather than real hunting: the hunters dance, they wear leopard hides (feline predators, as suggested by some evidence, were in ancient times associated with the underworld deity⁶³), the dancers include naked acrobats, drummers, headless figures.

Deer-hunting scenes are encountered on ■■ few masonry walls in Daghestan (Fig. 61). It is difficult to date them, because the time when a certain carved stone was manufactured does not necessarily correspond to the time when the structure containing the stone was erected: architectural details, including carved stones, from demolished old buildings were often used in new structures, and this repeated use could be multiple. Some features of these designs suggest that what they represented was not real hunting. More specifically, a rosette is present in all the three deer-hunt scenes found in Daghestan; if the rosette stands for the sun, the heavenly body is for some reason the only element in the landscape, and is depicted ■■ a symbol, not true to nature. In one of the designs the hunter

⁶³ See chapter "The Black God."



Fig. 62. Cosmic deer or elk: 1 — Karelia, Aeneolithic [290b, p. 237]; 2 — Hungary, ca 800 BC [822, p. 65]; 3 — Siberia, rock wall painting [535, p. 156]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [801, p. 63]; 5 — Northern Italy, Aeneolithic [619, p. 206]; 6 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [763, p. 74]; 7 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [839, p. 253]; 8 — Eastern Siberia, rock wall painting [303, p. 104].

has horns and the deer devours a snake.

A popular festival called "the Deer with the Golden Antlers", accompanied by mystery plays centering on a cosmic hunt, used to be celebrated in Siberia. A legend about a certain supernatural creature hunting deer is also known in Western Europe. These traditions and mystery plays appear to be remnants of ancient myths and rites. The essential content of the myth and of the related rites is revealed in two points: 1) the deer or elk carries the sun; 2) the cosmic deer is chased by a predator or a hunter eventually overtaking and killing it [24, p. 12; 290b, p. 238; 400, pp. 9, 173; 341, pp. 71, 72; 597, pp. 218-222].

Figure 62: 1-3 shows the elk carrying the sun; the same message is conveyed by the sculpture shown in Figure 62: 4, for in the Bronze period a bird symbolized the sun.⁶⁴ The solar or golden antler deer is known in Russian folklore; it figures in the Edda and in Greek myths; the Vedic goddess of dawn or sunrise turned into a doe [858, p. 113]; the Hittites used the deer image in their worship of the sun goddess [29, p. 16]; the Hebrew epithet for dawn is the "fallow deer of daybreak." The deer in rock wall representations in Sweden and Italy is associated with the sun; an anthropomorphic creature with deer antlers pushing the sun before it is shown in a pre-Hittite Anatolian design [620, pp. 161, 163].

This widespread association of the deer with the sun points to the considerably long standing of the concept. The second element of the myth is equally popular in the

region in question: the motif of a certain supernatural creature, either a human being or an animal, hunting a deer.

Both the Siberian and the European versions of the wonder deer myth involve evidence towards interpreting the image of the hunter pursuing the deer. In a number of traditions, he is a representative of the underworld [858, p. 114]. The "wild hunter" of the ancient Greeks is none but Hades himself [758, p. 196]. In Siberia and in Europe, he appears in the capacity of a thundergod [400, pp. 61, 83; 597, p. 217], which is a characteristic mythological image of the lord of the underworld creating thunderstorms by rising into the sky as a fiery serpent. In Western Slavic fairy tales nymphs ride on the back of deer goaded by snakes [40c, p. 464]; in Siberian myths a bear pursues a deer or elk [24, pp. 15, 67]; but both the serpent and the bear are images of the earth god, the lord of the underworld.⁶⁵ In Chinese traditions, Kua-Fu, a personage associated with the underworld, chases the sun. In Figure 62: 7 the deer is pursued by dogs; the dog is associated in myth and tradition with the underworld (if the dog represents the lower world, earth, the dots over the dog figures in this drawing are probably seed sown in the soil). In the languages of some Siberian nations, the metaphoric *■ ■ ■ ■ ■* for the bear hunting a heavenly deer can be translated as "lord of the lower world" or "devil" [24, p. 16]. Is this why the hunter is horned in a Daghestanian representation of a deer-hunt scene? A rock wall painting in the northern Italian mountains portrays a deer surrounded by shovels (Fig. 62: 5), the iron stove shovel being one of the symbols of the earth and underworld god, patron of smithery, fire, and bread. The second century Greek traveller and geographer Pausanias wrote that ritual eating of strangers by priests was practised in Lycia, while man-eaters were called wolves, and victims — deer [201, p. 8]; but the wolf is a common image of the underworld lord.⁶⁶ From all this the meaning of the Mesolithic deer immolations by drowning can be understood: water, earth, and underworld are the sphere of the deity of the lower universe. It is quite probable that the offering of deer antlers to sanctuaries by Northern Caucasian mountain dwellers was an atavism of the ancient rite of sacrificing deer to the deity.

In post-Neolithic times, the archaic image of the underworld god disintegrated into minor deities which included a special god of hunting. Northwestern Caucasian peoples had a mythical patron of hunting associated with thunder and lightning; this alone bespeaks his origin. His name was Apsati, Apsat; the root of this word (*sāt, sātī*) coincides with the stem of various mythological names which go back to the Neolithic underworld god: the earth god Seth and the sacred serpent Sata in Ancient Egypt, the Roman Saturn, the Hebrew Satan. This group of names for the god of hunting includes, presumably, Eustachius who chased a wonderful stag in Christian legend (incidentally, this saint was considered a patron of hunters, suggesting that he is the former pagan god of the chase). Repercussions of the myth reached pre-Columbian America in a distorted form

— the hunter and the hunted mingled to become a single image: the Aztec Mishkoatl is a serpent-like deity believed to be the lord of clouds (i.e., the Old World's mythical underworld god responsible for rain) who at the same time was the god of the chase, pictured as a stag [371b, p. 161].

An Armenian mythological motif tells about a hunter who wanted to strike down the sun, and a Nanaian one is about a hunter who wounded the sun with his arrow so that it started setting to the west. Notwithstanding the great distance between the Caucasus and the Far East, one cannot help recognizing that these two legends, judging by their unique morphology, originated from the same source. The same motif exists in the fairy tales of American Indians: the sun is struck by a hunter's arrow. The sun is hunted in the fairy tales of New Zealand aborigines. There used to be a custom in Germany to shoot at the sun on St. John's day, which was believed to ensure successful hunting [790, pp. 100, 133, 136, 261].

Thus, the Siberian legend and the Russian fairy tale about the Deer with the Golden Antlers and the Western European motif of the "wild chase" initiated by the thundergod accompanied by hounds can be reconstructed as an ancient myth (dating from before the Bronze Age) according to which the sun travels in heaven on the antlers of a wondrous stag pursued by the underworld deity. The latter overtakes the deer by the end of the day, which brings about sunset and the darkness of night. The traditions common to Egyptians, Indians, and other peoples, according to which a serpent attacks the sun, are a more recent, curtailed version of an earlier cosmological myth. As these tales underwent further evolution, a benevolent deity or a hero came to attack the devilish serpent. In the original myth, the chase after the solar stag ends in the triumph of the lord of the underworld, whereas in subsequent legends the serpent is defeated.

In many respects religious conceptions differed fundamentally in the Neolithic and the Bronze periods. In the Neolithic, heaven was represented by a female deity, earth by a male deity; in the Bronze Age this was the other way round. In the Indo-European cult (i.e., already during the Bronze Age), the eastern horizon was sacred: people prayed facing east, the dead were buried with their faces turned eastwards. But the early farming cult (i.e., Neolithic) was focused on the moment of sunset and on the western horizon. This is recorded, in particular, in the following expression of *The Pyramid Texts*: "Ra loves the west" [391b, p. 32]. Pagan temples in Europe, the Caucasus, India, and Ancient Egypt had the altar facing west. Egyptian texts refer to Osiris who was of chthonic nature, as lord of the west, the Greeks called Hades the god of the west, the early Christians believed that "the devil resides in the west" [662, pp. 13, 80]. The westerly wind in Egypt was depicted as a four-headed winged snake.⁶⁷ For American Indians the west was "a happy hunting ground" [730b, pp. 1419, 1674].

Tribes among whom the early farming religion was originally formed populated the eastern shores of the

Mediterranean Sea; many elements of this religion can be traced to the cult and mythological conceptions of Paleolithic tribes populating the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean. For both of them, the sea was situated in the west. This produced a semantic correlation between the "west," on the one hand, and "sea, ocean," on the other.

Hesiod writes that gorgons live "in the west, on the farther side of the sea." Hittite and ancient Indian texts, as well as Russian fairy tales, link the sun with the sea. Slavs are Indo-Europeans, and their cult conceptions centered on the moment of sunrise, not sunset; due to a confusion of mythological conceptions, a strange belief arose that the sun rises from the sea, that the "sea-ocean" is in the east [200, pp. 116, 136], despite the fact that there is no sea or ocean to the east of the territory inhabited by Slavs.

Besides a semantic relationship between the west and the sea, based on the coincidence of their spatial positions, there were other reasons for the association: the lord of the underworld was at the same time the sovereign of the sea, and the entrance to his abode was in the west.

The cult conceptions which took shape in post-Neolithic times were hostile to the earliest farmers' deities. Hence a negative attitude to the "sea-ocean" in Russian tradition; disease and death are associated with the sea, wicked "bare-headed witches" come out of the sea (an image of the Neolithic goddess and her priestesses with loose hair), and the sea king is identical with the serpent and the devil. However, atavisms of early farming beliefs were inherited by Slavic and other Indo-European peoples; hence the expressions "Father Sea" and "resigned to the blue sea" [200, pp. 114-117]. The semantically identical expressions — the Russian "sea wolf" and the English "sea dog" may derive from the fact that both the wolf and the dog represented the deity of the lower universe (the underworld, the earth, and the sea). The notion formed in Western Europe and the Middle East, that the sea and the earth god were related, reached the Far East: the Nivhes refer to the lord of the world as the "Old Man of the Sea."

It remains unclear why the stag or elk in archaic cosmology became a creature with solar connections. There are no grounds for the assumption that the deer could be identified with the sun. It merely transported the sun, but its nature was quite different. It follows from myths that the deer is an "underworld animal" [354, p. 4]. A Lapland tradition goes: "From the interior of Mother Earth runs Myandash, the wild deer... His path is the sun's path... The deer with golden antlers..." [341, pp. 71, 72]. The Celtic deity with deer antlers, referred to as Cernunnos in Roman texts, was believed to have underworld connections [371b, p. 617]. Paleolithic portrayals of a half-deer and half-bull may be interpreted as expressing the idea that the deer is an earthly animal.⁶⁸ In Hebrew, the words for deer and tortoise are of the same root (*ḥvi* and *ḥav*); in ancient times the tortoise was looked upon as an embodiment of the earth; it can be concluded from this that mythological thinking associated the deer with the earth.

⁶⁴ See chapter "The Double Spiral."

⁶⁵ See chapters "Snake-Water" and "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."

⁶⁶ See chapter "The Black God."

⁶⁷ The early farmers' religious conceptions dealt with the earth god as the lord of the four quarters of the world; hence representations of four-headed or four-faced male deities.

⁶⁸ The bull was seen as a personification of the earth; see chapter "The Bull-Moon."

In a number of languages deer antlers, even the deer (or elk) itself, are designated by words deriving from the names of tree branches: the Russian *sohaty* for 'deer, elk', the Scythian *sāka* ('deer') resemble the Sanskrit *sakha* ('bough, branch'), while the Lithuanian *šaka* means 'bough, branch,' as well as 'antlers.' In some ancient drawings deer antlers are depicted as plant shapes (Fig. 62: 6). These associative ideas could be due to deer antlers' resemblance to tree branches and to the fact that the stag sheds its antlers in autumn and grows new ones in spring, similarly to the annual regeneration of vegetation. If so, the deer had to be perceived as bound to earth, since its antlers grow like trees and bushes from the ground. The Hebrew words for deer and ram come from the *šam* root (*aial* and *ail*); as will be shown in another chapter, ancient traditions presented the ram as an animal associated with terrestrial vegetation, so this also applies to the deer.

In an ancient Western Asian design a deer is shown as a theriomorphic earth symbol: its trunk is triangular (Fig. 208: 11); the triangle, a polysemantic figure, could designate not only a rain cloud, but also earth (Fig. 83: 4). In this drawing a wavy line issues from the deer's mouth; apparently it is a conventionalized representation of a spring issuing from the ground. The wavy line is the symbol of water (the adjacent sprouts designate vegetation irrigated by water). The wavy line coming out of the deer's mouth conveys the idea that water issues from the earth. Consequently, the deer was associated with the earth.

But the wavy line in ancient graphic art also served to represent snakes. Portrayals of the "earthly being" — the deer — with a spring flowing from its mouth were misunderstood in later times; hence more recent representations of the deer devouring a snake [803, pp. 17-60; 835, p. 254]. These pictures gave rise to a tradition that the deer devours snakes (this opinion must also have been formed under the influence of legends about the conflict between the sun deer and the underworld serpent).

Information contained in myths and rites can explain the meaning of ancient designs in which the "earthly creature" — the deer — is located in the sky.

A pendant depicting a deer head (Fig. 63: 1) dating from the fourth millennium B.C. was found in Russia. B. Rybakov interprets it as a heavenly deer looking down on earth. H. Sicard lists examples of ancient representations of a deer whose posterior is replaced by a spiral or a disk [835, p. 254], which must be an expression of the deer's association with heaven. E. Anati describes rock wall paintings discovered in Italy, which, he holds, show a deer running toward the sun or into the sun [619, p. 163]; but this scholar mistook the sky symbol for the representation of the sun. Bronze figurines from Asia Minor dated the third millennium B.C. depict a deer passing through a ring [782c, Tables 309, 310, 313, 314], the ring being a heaven symbol. A rock wall painting found in Siberia (Fig. 62: 8) also expresses the connection between the deer and heaven, supposing the disk here is a sky sign. Three deer antlers in this drawing are paralleled by the Neolithic representation of a deer bearing three antlers (Fig. 309: 10); a three-antlered deer figures among rock wall drawings in Daghestan [257, p. 29, Fig. 28]; so far it is not possible to say what it means.



Fig. 63. Celestial deer: 1 — Russia, ca 3000 BC [470, p. 58]; 2—5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [696, pp. 174, 172].

B. Rybakov and M. Gimbutas refer to pottery designs of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture, which can be interpreted as conventional representations of the heavenly deer (Fig. 63: 2-5). The deer are, indeed, up in the sky, as is attested by accompanying signs, such as the moon, the constellation of Aries (three dots), the symbol of rain (a comb). Besides, the vortical movement of the deer indicates that they move in the sky. It is hard to say why there are two deer in these designs. Perhaps these images express the idea of the mythical deer's dual character. The double symbols of the earth god and heaven goddess in all probability expressed the concept that these deities could be present in both the earthly and in the celestial spheres of the universe. Apparently, the double deer in the designs also had this particular meaning.

There is nothing surprising about a terrestrial creature placed in the sky. This is quite common in Neolithic myths. For example, the bull is an incarnation of earth, but at the same time it is represented by the moon; the lord of the underworld rises up to the sky as a fiery serpent. Even the sun, which follows from ancient Egyptian concepts, is by no means the exclusive property of the heavens: it stays alternately in the sky and underground. Moreover, as suggested by some Egyptian texts, it feels more at home in a swamp or a lake than in the heavens [766b, p. 23]. In American Indian myths, before the sun got to the sky it stayed in a mountain lake [790, p. 6]. In Hittite texts the sun goddess is mentioned among deities of the world of the dead. In a Japanese fairy tale, the sun maiden hides in a cave. A Judaic prayer notes that the Most High "brings the sun out of its place." In the myths of many peoples, the underworld is the sun's permanent habitation, it appears in the sky temporarily and not of its own free will at that.

It follows from all this that the deer abducted the sun from the underworld and, escaping, carried the sun across the sky. Why did he do this?

Like the lord of the underworld, the deer is a male being. This is clear from its antlers. Only northern deer have antlers, whereas the myth in question, judging by the areas where it prevails, primarily reflected the cosmogonic

conceptions of other than Arctic peoples. Also, in ancient illustrations, the deer usually has the male attribute.

There is ground to assume that, contrary to Indo-European mythological conceptions, the sun was considered female in the mythology of early farming cultures. The Hittite and Georgian sun deities were feminine. The sun was considered female by Australians, Malaysians, Eskimos, and some American Indian tribes. Semites, close neighbors of the early farming Western Asian tribes, also had a female sun deity (it was only during the second millennium B.C. that it turned into a male deity among northern Semites). Insofar as the sun transported by a stag was pictured as a woman, one can understand the meaning of portrayals of a woman riding on the back of a deer (Fig. 62: 2) and the popular tale that nymphs ride on deer.

In an ancient oriental tradition assimilated in Europe, Sunday was dedicated to the sun. Slavs regarded Sunday as feminine and worshiped a female image on that day [475, p. 36]. This also shows that the sun deity had female characteristics in earliest human history.

Myths according to which the lord of the underworld's habitat was in the west and which personified the rising sun by a female image, even affected the cosmogonic conceptions of African tribes; some of them associate the west with the masculine and the east with the feminine gender.

Indo-European nations, like the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Egyptians, who personified the sun deity by a male image, also maintained another concept which must have been borrowed from the religious views of the early farming tribes they assimilated. For example, the Hittites continued to worship, alongside the colorless sun god, a sun goddess (believed to be the spouse of the thundergod, the pre-Indo-European thundergod being the underworld serpent). The Rig-Veda expounds a compromise involving the sun god Sūrya and the sun goddess Sūryah.

Germanic tribes do not appear to have worshiped a sun god, but they had a sun goddess Sunna (this name is an ancient form of the modern *Sonne*). The German word *Sonne* is of feminine gender; "Frau Sonne" is a German folklore personage [829b, p. 36]. In Old English, the word *sun* was feminine in gender. Scandinavian medieval sources mention a sun goddess Sol; incidentally, she is chased by a wolf [829b, p. 35].

The word meaning 'sun' is neuter in Slavic languages, and the sun god is pictured as a male; at the same time in Slavic folklore the sun is not infrequently represented by a female image, while the moon is a male [541, p. 197]. The Rig-Veda tells of the moon god Soma marrying the sun goddess Sūryah, and a Mongolian fairy tale relates a romantic affair between a girl called Sunshine and a man named Moon [857, p. 75].

The Lithuanian *saule* is of feminine gender. Lithuanian folk songs picture the sun as a maiden, a bride [829b, pp. 392-396]. These songs do not say who exactly the solar maiden's promised husband is, and the marriage is not entirely happy: the girl is supposed to marry the morning star, she is also asked in marriage by certain "god's sons," but it is the Moon (i.e., the bull-moon, an incarnation of the earth god) or Perkunas (thundergod, underworld god)

who eventually wins her. The wedding takes place "beyond the sea," in the west, i.e., where the sun sets; consequently, the solar maiden falls prey to the lord of the underworld.

Yet another circumstance indicates the female identity once attributed to the sun. Throughout Europe, from Ireland to Russia, there was a tradition that the sun dances as it rises on certain days of the year. The same notion is expressed in Greek myths [759, p. 99]. Ancient Indian Ushas, the rising sun goddess, also dances. No actually observable celestial phenomenon could have given rise to this widespread and consistent opinion. What then is the reason for it? Neolithic rites surviving into Classical Antiquity were characterized by orgiastic dancing (it is understandable that an early Christian saint should dream he saw the Evil Spirit incarnated in a dancing woman [662, p. 551]). The "folk dances" studied by ethnographers are in fact relics of ancient rites. Women's dances representing the solar maiden would have produced the dancing sun concept. When Persephone learned that she would be released from the underworld and allowed to go back to her mother, she started to dance with joy; this scene was probably imitated in cult rites, especially those of springtime, which could explain why the dancing sun tradition relegates this event mainly to the Easter holidays. Reminiscences of the ancient myth about the solar maiden appearing in the east can still be discerned in the ritual dances of some peoples: in Lithuania, young girls danced facing east during spring festivals; maidens in an American Indian tribe dance facing east during menstruation [819, pp. 69, 140].

The image of the sun is a maiden, rather than a woman. She is always represented as a bride or a daughter, but never as a mature woman. The heaven goddess is usually the sun's mother. The sun in Lithuanian songs is referred to as "God's daughter"; the same songs also mention a personage called "sun's mother" [759, p. 92]. The Rig-Veda and Latvian traditions refer to dawn as "heaven's daughter" [778b, p. 432]. There was a European custom of burying a female form which probably personified an annual phase of the goddess; in Albania, this rite was called "funeral of the sun's mother" [228c, p. 261]. Aditi, a Rig-Veda supreme female deity, is referred to as the "sun's mother." Slavic fairy tales call the sun's mother a prophetic spinner [40a, p. 390]; both "prophetic" and "spinner" are attributes of the early farmers' heaven goddess.⁶⁹ The "heavenly cow" was considered the sun's mother in Egyptian mythology [371a, p. 200]; in the same mythology the cow was an incarnation of the heaven goddess.

Inasmuch as the heaven goddess is the mother of the solar maiden abducted by the underworld god, it is easy to see the origin of the Greek myth in which Hades (or Pluto), the lord of the underworld kingdom, abducted Demeter's daughter Persephone, who then had to live alternately with her husband in the underworld and with her mother in heaven. Pagan Lithuanians believed that the sun was once kept in confinement within a tower; the abode of the underworld god was described in numerous traditions as a castle, a fortress, a fortified house, a tower. Hence the popular fairy tale motif of a maiden locked up in a tower by her father.

⁶⁹ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

Savitar in the Rig-Veda is sometimes identified with the sun and sometimes with the sun's father. At the same time he possesses certain attributes typical of the pre-Aryan underworld god: he is endowed with wisdom, rules the world, controls water courses, and has a triple nature. His spouse Savitri is a praiseworthy wife in the Vedic interpretation. Some authors associate the names of Savitar and Savitri with the Sanskrit *su* ('to give birth'). If this is correct, it would seem that the Neolithic mother and father of the world, the Great Goddess and the earth god, were the prototypes of this conjugal couple. If so, it would seem that following the Neolithic mythological conception, the underworld god was the father of the sun goddess.

The Sumerian and post-Sumerian Mesopotamian moon god was regarded as the sun god's father. What is the origin of this apparently incongruous notion? In the Neolithic myth, fragments of which were absorbed into Mesopotamian traditions, the Great Goddess was the sun's mother; consequently, the sun's father had to be the goddess's spouse, i.e., the earth god, and the moon was one of his manifestations. There is nothing unusual in that as a result, the daughter was her father's concubine: such occurrences are quite common in the ancient myths of different peoples. In a number of languages the word for 'hunt' is etymologically related to those meaning 'desire, solicit, love, impregnate' [108, p. 695]; this may be accounted for by the assumption that the thundergod's hunt for the Wonderful Deer arose from rivalry over the solar maiden each of them claimed.

The oldest myth about the relationship between the sun and the lord of the underworld experienced fanciful transformations in Egyptian cult conceptions. The scarab rolling a dung ball was associated with the god Hepera rolling the sun into the sky. Hepera was the god of the underworld kingdom (his other name was Ptah); the deceased appeared before him in the abode of the dead. For this reason a stone scarab was put into the dead body in place of the heart. The name Hepera (Hepru) is probably associated etymologically with the Sumerian name of the underworld god Subur, also with the Avestan *hvar* and Sanskrit *sūvar* ('sun').

Indo-European beliefs, unfavorably disposed to the aspect of the Neolithic religion which expressed notions concerning the underworld god, the west, and sunset, turned, by way of opposition, to the moment of sunrise. However, the Neolithic myth about the fiery sun maiden rising miraculously to heaven from the underworld and then returning to it, provided the background for the image of the Indo-European goddess of dawn. This is attested by the name of the goddess and some of her attributes.

According to a Vainakhian tradition, a serpent seduced the sun's daughter Aza (the formulation "sun's daughter" must be considered a consequence of a later transformation of the myth, making the sun deity masculine). In all likelihood, the name Aza, as well as the names of the Indo-European goddess of dawn, such as Indian Ushas, Greek Eos, correlates with the Nostratic **asa* ('fire') [210, p. 262]. But associated with the same **asa* is an entire sequence of names and epithets referring to the underworld god.⁷⁰ The similarity in names for the underworld god and the rising sun (or dawn) goddess points to the affinity of

these mythological personages.

Ushas is a popular image of the Rig-Veda (the sun goddess Sūryah is usually merely mentioned). Ushas' features betray her connections with the Neolithic sun goddess: she is a daughter of heaven, a dancer, her father's lover, she "comes out of a solid dwelling" (apparently the earth), "issues from a mountain" (the abode of the underworld god), donates riches (a characteristic of the underworld lord), who possesses fabulous treasures and can make one rich), drives horses (which, as will be shown below, replaced the original deer), and is in conflict with Indra who destroyed her chariot (Indra is a product of the transformation of the Neolithic thundergod, the god of the underworld⁷¹) [166, p. 69].

The images of the female deities of the Neolithic religion — the sun goddess and the heaven goddess — were confused in later epochs. For example, Ushas gives birth to the sun [131, p. 67], yet, the heaven goddess is the sun's mother; Ushas provides honey, yet honey, as will be shown later, is an attribute of the Great Goddess; the Arabs regarded the sun goddess as a destructive creature, which in the earliest farmers' religion was not her attribute, but her mother's, the heaven goddess; the Japanese Amaterasu bears features of both these deities, she is simultaneously a supreme goddess and the goddess of the rising sun.

Thus, the content of the oldest cosmogonic myth, accounting for sunrise and sunset is as follows: a deer (an earthly creature) stole the sun maiden from the underworld and escaped with her to the sky; the furious lord of the underworld chased the deer, struck him down and got his prisoner back.

Thousands of years passed, the original myths were forgotten, but their echoes have survived till this day. In a Georgian tale, a young stag longs for Beautiful Helen. The young stag is at odds with Dav (a transformed archaic underworld god) who is also in love with her. The King Wind (another image going back to the concept of the "infernal serpent," who, rising into the sky, produces thunderstorms) keeps the beauty behind nine locks (nine is a number associated with the underworld god⁷²). Helen's mother is a sorceress capable of putting a person to death and reviving him (the heaven goddess was a source of life and death).

Myth and ritual are inseparable in a cult, they constitute the cult in its entirety. The myth under study once probably represented the content not only of verbal traditions, but also of rites. The festival of the Deer with the Golden Antlers is apparently a survival of the latter. Rituals illustrating the rivalry between the claimants to the sun maiden also probably existed. Hence, apparently, the origin of various ball games: the Aztec ritual ball game and spring-time ball games known in Germany and in England (in the course of time these became sports events: football, volleyball, basketball, and handball). If the reader is not prepared to take for granted the assumption that football is not originally a British game and that it first developed from the mystery play about the struggle for the sun,

⁷⁰See chapter "The Four Seasons."

⁷¹See chapter "The White God."

⁷²See chapter "Stars."

consider the fact that football has been played in Indonesia since time immemorial and that it uses a burning ball. The Latin *pāgānica* ('playing ball') has the same root as *pāgānus* ('heathen').

Ball games in England were timed for Shrovetide. It will be shown that this holiday was a pagan festival marking the awakening of the earth god from hibernation. Perhaps the god woke up when he sensed that the stag had taken the sun maiden away, and he started chasing it (indeed, according to an Andamanian legend, fire was stolen from the sleeping god). The association of Shrovetide with this myth is attested by the custom of baking round pancakes which reproduce the sun in shape and color; in England, racing contests for women were held during this festival, each woman tossing a pancake on the frying-pan while running.

The myth of the deer that stole the sun was transformed into other myths which have reached us: Prometheus stole fire from the gods and was tortured, Agni was persecuted by the gods, the German Loki (an underworld demon) stole a shining necklace from the heaven goddess. Perhaps the sun is that very fire stolen by Prometheus, for as related by the myth, people lived in darkness until then. According to the common version of the Greek myth, Prometheus stole fire from Zeus, the heaven god; however, in another version, he stole fire from Hephaestus' smithery, i.e., from the underworld.⁷³ One of the names for Agni is Pramathi; according to Indian texts, the wooden shank revolved to produce fire was called *pramantha* [827, p. 104]; in a Vainakhian myth, the thundergod puts the hero Pkharmath, who stole fire from him for the people, to perpetual torture. All this evidence indicates that both the name of Prometheus and his image of having obtained fire are not confined to ancient Greek culture. The myth, with modifications, but maintaining its principal features, spread far beyond Europe and Western Asia. The Matu tribe in New Guinea has preserved a tradition that it was a dog (a creature associated with the underworld) that brought fire to people; according to an Australian myth, fire was given to people by a human being whom the infuriated gods turned into a bird as punishment [240, p. 285] (this myth, like the Greek, has the motif of divine fury and punishment; the transformation into a bird is also of interest: the deer who stole fire flew up into the sky).

In Athens, a statue of Prometheus stood next to that of Hephaestus; their common sacrificial altar was also there; Aeschylus' Hephaestus, reluctant to fulfil Zeus' order to punish Prometheus, refers to the kinship between them. The centaur Hiron sacrificed his immortality for Prometheus' release. But both Hephaestus and the centaur are mythological images which can be traced to archaic concepts of the underworld. It seems likely that the conduct of Hephaestus and Hiron was due to the underworld origin of Prometheus. In American Indian tales the sun was introduced into the sky by a raven, a tortoise, or a coyote [790, pp. 4-7], all these being underworld creatures. An Adygei (the Caucasus) legend relates that fire was taken from hell [604, p. 30].

⁷³The image of Hephaestus, the blacksmith god who lives underground, was assimilated by the Greeks from the previous population of Hellas; the name Hephaestus is not Greek in origin.

Post-Neolithic myths had a tendency to both differentiate and confuse Neolithic myths, and also, in cases of affinities between deities, to transfer attributes of one deity to the other. For instance, in later representations, the underworld god sometimes took on the appearance of a dog or a horse, though originally these creatures were considered only associated with him; the divine ram was given the features of the underworld god, whose son it was. Similarly, the deer with the golden antlers acquired some of the characteristics of the underworld god: deer were accredited with extreme longevity and prophetic qualities [240, pp. 104, 105]. In an Ekoi (Nigeria) myth, fire was stolen from the heavens by a certain boy,⁷⁴ for which he was punished with lameness [371b, p. 234], but according to European and Western Asian myths, it was the lord of the underworld who went lame as a result of a furious onslaught by the heaven god. As tradition goes, Prometheus created the first man by molding his body from clay, and Athene then breathed life into him; in Neolithic religious conceptions, the earth god and the heaven goddess created mankind. Athene, indeed, derived from the Neolithic Great Goddess, but Prometheus was not a former earth god, one of whose functions was attributed to him.

A motif in the myths of various peoples resembles the story of the punishment meted out to Prometheus. In Adygei legends, the thundergod Pako chained one of his adversaries to a mountain [371b, p. 274]. Amiran, a hero of Georgian legends, "waged war even against god," who chained him to an iron pillar (the root of the name Amiran contains the consonants *m.r.*; as will be shown later, many of the names and terms pertaining to the underworld god's sphere are based on these sounds). In a Vietnamese myth, the thundergod Tkhen-Set was chained by order of the supreme god, and a cock pecked at his body [371b, p. 536]. A hero of an ancient Armenian legend is taken prisoner by demons who chain him to a cliff [610, pp. 108, 258]. All these tales, including the Greek myth, hold contradictions: in some of them the punishment is inflicted by the thundergod (that is the underworld god), in others it is he who suffers the punishment. This confusion resulted from distortions inevitable in the course of oral transmission of a story from generation to generation over millennia, and the dissemination of legends among peoples speaking different languages. In all probability the original version of the story was that the punishment was imposed by the thundergod on whoever stole fire from him. In some myths the god himself was punished, for the thundergod and the one who stole fire from him were closely related and could therefore sometimes be confused. Whatever the case, the "thief" was a creature of the underworld.

It has already been suggested that the original myth, in which the god-serpent pursues the deer who abducted the sun maiden, turned in the course of time into a legend about the struggle of a splendid hero with a serpent, resulting in the release of the captive maiden. The myth had other transformations as well, such as, for example, the motif of the liberation of heavenly waters locked up by the serpent. The wonderful deer who stole the sun maiden

⁷⁴In all probability, the original myth dealt with a youth, rather than a boy; the deer who stole the maiden must have been a male of corresponding age.

for himself turned into a hero who procured the sun, light, and fire for human beings. Later he became a general benefactor, introducing people to other values associated with the underworld god: farming, trades, knowledge. The deer image was extremely popular in Scythian art; the ethnonym of the Scythians, *sāka*, means 'deer'; it is possible that the Scythians venerated the deer as their benefactor, a good genius. In a Lapland tradition, the Wonderful Deer is a helpmate, a patron, a benefactor, and a teacher of people [597, pp. 218-220]. In a Christian legend, a stag says to Eustachius: "Why do you chase me, your savior?"⁷⁵

Consequently, the image of a "culture hero," known in the legends of many peoples, the legendary personality who accomplishes a civilizing mission for the good of mankind, apparently comes from the myth about the sun-carrying deer. According to these legends, the culture hero possesses characteristics borrowed from the image of the underworld god (although it is unlikely that he is descended from the god, for the latter is cruel, bloodthirsty, and hostile to humanity). So, in Vedic mythology, Yama, the god of death, is a benefactor of mankind: it was he who gave people fire and enlightened them spiritually. In Armenian tradition, Tyr, the lord of the underworld, has a similar reputation, being a patron of wisdom, literacy, and the arts. Chiang in Chinese mythology is the father of divine twins; this characterizes him as the underworld god⁷⁶; at the same time, he occasionally assumed the guise of a deer and failed in his undertakings [730a, p. 311], probably a reflection on the setback suffered by the sun-bearing stag in his enterprise. A personage in Adygei mythology resembles the underworld god (he is a "giant," "old man"), Prometheus (he is chained to a cliff), and the culture hero: high in the mountains is a gigantic old man chained to a rock for attempting to rebel against God; once upon a time he taught people to build houses, read and write, work their land, and play musical instruments [604, p. 134]. A "thunder bird" plays the role of a culture hero among northwestern African tribes [371a, p. 514]; in myths of Central America a winged serpent not only bestows rain and is a protector of farming, but is also a patron of metalworking, trades, construction, healing, the arts, music, learning, and literacy (the underworld god was the original patron of these human activities). It is likely that the wonderful deer, an "underworld being" who retrieved the sun from the earth's interior, became a good genius by giving people other boons as well, which had been in the possession of the underworld god.

As the myth underwent transformation and the initial images of these two personages lost their distinctiveness, they became confounded. This could have been due to the fact that the image of the dying and reviviscent deity of vegetation was associated with the underworld god who himself appears in some myths as a suffering god; hence

⁷⁵There is a Daghestanian fairy tale about a hunter pursuing a deer who had previously been in the company of a long-bearded man [the underworld god] and a maiden [the sun goddess]. The hunter chases the deer until it asks him in a human voice: "Why don't you leave me alone?" [370, p. 165]. Judging by the morphology of this tale, it is not a replica of the Christian legend of St. Eustace; rather the two legends stem from a common, more archaic prototype.

⁷⁶See chapter "Janus and the Twins."

perhaps the motif of the culture hero who suffers for his good deeds. It is possible that the underworld god, man's adversary, was transformed into a well-wisher under the influence of myths about his sons, the divine twins, who won a reputation as benefactors of humanity. This, however, does not rule out the possibility of a direct transformation of the former underworld god into the giver of earthly blessings. He, the earth god, the parent of all growth, was worshiped with prayer to ensure rich crops — and this might have led to the notion that it was he who taught man the art of farming. Master of metals hidden in the ground, and equipped with a hammer (originally a weapon and subsequently a tool), he became a patron of forging and other trades as well. He was a jovial musician, and therefore taught people fine arts. Life and health depended on him, so he became a patron of medicine. He was wise and omniscient, so the concept of the source of knowledge can be traced to him. Whatever the case, the culture hero provides cultural goods which he obtains in the underworld.

Mythological thinking has a peculiar logic. The unfriendly underworld god was considered a benefactor, whereas the image of the light-bearing stag had a negative aspect. The sun deer myth produced the notion of the deer as a chthonic creature. This notion is rather archaic: as far back as the Mesolithic, deer antlers marked places of interment [726, p. 31]. The deer image was associated with funerary rites in ancient times [67, pp. 6, 13]. According to a popular belief shared from Western Europe to China, "the deer leads to the world of the dead" [835, p. 271; 730, p. 1489]. As the deer was believed to guide the souls of the dead [240, p. 106], it acquired the significance of a chthonic creature. Bronze deer figurines accompany the dead in ancient burial places; votive boats incarnating the idea of retiring to the abode of the dead sometimes had deer protomes; the deer image decorated the hilts of swords and daggers.

The ancients, trying to find an explanation for natural phenomena, could not help seeing that the sky took on scarlet hues in the west at sunset. Alternative explanations for this phenomenon would be that the sky was stained with the blood of the slaughtered deer or that it was lighted up by underground fire. Both explanations fit in with the overall cosmogonic conception. Either way, red was associated with the west, with the underground world, with the underworld god.

Some myths picture the cosmic egg from which the universe originated, in three colors: the white upper part (the sky), the middle black portion (earth), and the red bottom (underworld) [527, p. 85]. A Scandinavian saga describes the World Tree as possessing red roots, a green trunk, and white branches; this non-naturalistic coloring is symbolic: white designated the celestial sphere, green — the terrestrial world, and red — the underworld. It follows from what can be learned of ancient Indian (pre-Aryan) civilization, that religious practice in those times involved worship of the mother goddess and of the "invulnerable" (cf. the Russian *Kašči* the Immortal) god, called "the brazen" (i.e., master of metals) and "the red one." The Indian Aryan god of death Yama was pictured dressed in red. The mythical serpent, or dragon, was imaged in different parts

of the world painted red. Red symbolized earth among the ancient Hebrews; some American Indian tribes associated it with stone [730, p. 1327]. The only plausible explanation of the correlation between the serpent, earth, and stone, on the one hand, and red on the other, is that red was the color associated with the underworld god since the distant past. At different times and among different peoples red also symbolized the male sex, vigor, action, war, wrath, health, the hunt, lightning, love, lust, and authority [730, p. 1327], all these being qualities associated with the underworld god.⁷⁷

In Ancient Greece, priests brandished red kerchiefs while facing west [662, p. 81]. An old Russian popular belief recommended wiping one's face with a red cloth on hearing thunder. Northern Caucasian mountain dwellers used red flags in their rites of supplication for rain [12, p. 378]. In India a red spiral is painted on the door of the house where a woman is in labor; it is supposed to ensure safe delivery [756, p. 111] (the serpent, being an incarnation of male sex vigor, was considered the giver and patron of conception). The underworld god was a personification of bellicosity, and red became an attribute of the god of war. In Ancient Rome, the victor rode in ceremony up the Capitoline hill, with his face painted red, for he "represented the god's countenance" [273, p. 196]. Priapus was one of the mythological images going back to the Neolithic underworld god who, among other things, personified male generative power; the statue of Priapus was painted red [273, p. 196]. The Phoenician phallic deity Cadmus was referred to as the "red god." The Adygei god of farming had the epithet "red" [604, p. 81]. Bacchus, the Roman god of earthly fertility, was pictured attired in red. As the early farming religion collapsed, its gods turned into demons, initially awesome, but in the course of time ridiculous, like the wood-goblin or the water-sprite; in Russian popular beliefs, the water-sprite wore a red shirt. It was an archaic ritual to paint Easter eggs red; this custom existed as far back as in Ancient Egypt. Even when eggs were painted other colors, they were called "red" [228b, pp. 25, 42, 306], since the egg was an attribute of the serpent, the lord of the underworld. In Russian, the word for 'worm' has the same root as the name of the color red in Ukrainian (*červ* and *červony*); these words are etymologically related to the Hebrew *šarav* ('to burn').

The color black, too, was associated with the underworld god, the "prince of darkness." Therefore, black and red are traditionally associated with the devil. In a pre-Columbian American ritual, a human sacrifice was offered during the sowing period (to the earth god, in all probability), the body of the victim being painted black and red [558, p. 478]. In medieval Western Europe, theologians wore black and red clothes, apparently a survival of a tradition among pagan priests in the remote past.

The Slavic *krasny* for "red" is etymologically related to the Sanskrit *kr̥ṣṇa* for "black." The similar, in fact, identical names of different colors are due to the fact that the corresponding words derive from the name of the same deity symbolized by the colors red and black. Etymologically these words are outside the framework of

⁷⁷See chapter "The Black God."

the Indo-European languages, if one takes into account that the name of Indian Krishna is Dravidian in origin.⁷⁸

Coloring the deceased red was practised since Paleolithic times. In America and Australia, as well as Eurasia, burials dating from 30 to 20 thousand years B.C. are encountered in which the dead bodies were sprinkled with red ocher. This ritual took shape during the time of Neanderthal man.

What is the meaning of this detail in the funerary rite? It is commonly assumed that red symbolizes blood, life in this case. Would the practice of making the corpse red then express a desire to bring the deceased back to life? This incentive *might* play a certain role, and it *could* find expression in the above action. But *was* it really so? As will be shown later, Neanderthal interments were human immolations; also known is a Neanderthal ritual interment in which portions of a deer carcass sprinkled with red ocher were found [508, p. 163]. Why did Neanderthal man color his offerings to the god red? Was it regret at death and a wish for resurrection in the other world? Or what is more likely, did red mark an offering of the sacrifice to the underworld god?

All known ancient funerary rites bespeak dread of the dead person and fear lest he return to the living, lest he rise from the dead. To be on the safe side, the dead were first of all tied up. This custom of tying up the corpse existed as far back as the Paleolithic Age, judging by strongly twisted skeletons. Some tribes practised it until the twentieth century. Archeological evidence indicates that in funerary rituals since Paleolithic times, the deceased was tied up and sprinkled with red [458, p. 37]. On the one hand, the corpse was tied up to rule out the possibility of its rising from the grave, on the other, it was colored in order to breathe life into it. Strange logic even for primitive man. Incidentally, in many ancient burials red ocher covers not only the body, but the entire grave as well; in some cases the floor of the grave rather than the dead body is reddened [458, p. 30].

Some tribes not only tied up their dead, but also struck them with weapons, even mutilated them. To avoid the return of the dead, many peoples "deceived" them in a peculiar way: the body was taken out of the house not through the door, but through an opening made specially for the purpose and walled up immediately afterwards; this custom occurred world-wide. Finally, to make sure that the dead person will not rise, the grave was covered with a large stone (hence the custom of setting grave stones in the form of slabs or stone constructions over burial places). In the Ancient East and in Europe graves of particularly hated persons were heaped with stones [225, p. 79]. The Kets addressed their dead during the burial ceremony with the following words: "Here will be your home, do not go far away" [153, p. 103].

As for the "resurrection" desired by the living for the dead, it might suffice to quote a phrase pronounced by the Greeks after funerals: "Look that way, and send here what is good" [73, p. 134]. For this reason the dead body is taken out of the house feet first, so that the deceased

⁷⁸See chapter "The Black God" for additional information on the root word *k.r.s.*

could "look that way." He is buried with shoes on, to encourage him to "go there." There used to be a custom in Russia to bury the dead towards the end of the day; this was obviously associated with the hope that the deceased would follow the sun to the underworld and not, heaven forbid, stay in the world of the living. In Greenland, the deceased was accompanied on his way to the cemetery by an old woman who shook a burning splinter and shouted: "There's nothing for you here!" [28, p. 89].

Food was provided for the dead not so much as a token of care for their needs as to avoid their displeasure [292, pp. 135-150]. Studies of Asian, African, Oceanian, and Siberian ethnic groups indicate that funerary rites were primarily meant to prevent the return of the dead, rather than to ensure their well-being in the world beyond. It can be seen from the rites proper that fear of the dead was stronger than affection. This is particularly true since the deceased were cared for by their immediate family, whereas funerary rites were determined by other than close relatives of the deceased. In very much the same way, in Phoenicia and Carthage children from noble families were sacrificed to Moloch not because their parents wished it, but in obedience to community decisions.

In Central Europe, a Mesolithic burial of human skulls has been discovered with traces of violence on them; the skulls were arranged facing west and reddened [760, pp. 130, 131]. These were obviously immolations. But why were the skulls made red? In order to revive the dead? An ancient Russian painting depicts a corpse being placed in a red-colored sledge [28, p. 95]. What does the red imply in this case? Is it the color of life or of death? There was a custom among ancient Indian Aryans and also in modern England to dress a person sentenced to death in red; what was this supposed to express — a wish for the condemned man to return to life following execution, or to go where he belonged?

It is most unlikely that the dead were reddened in order to breathe life into them. The rite obviously symbolized relinquishing them to the lord of the beyond. These conceptions also underlay the rite of cremation: fire and the color red played the same role of agent of the underworld god. And the funerary rite of committing the corpses to earth was a realization of the idea of giving the dead to the earth god.

The above, however, does not imply that red could not be associated with blood in ancient times. But whether or not such an association existed, and whether it had anything to do with coloring the dead red, and if so, what — so far this is all a matter of speculation, not supported by objective evidence. The numerous facts listed above indicate that red was associated with death in the remote past. At the same time, other evidence, more recent, suggests that blood was considered a vehicle of life.⁷⁹ Are the two concepts interrelated? And if so, how? In trying to answer these questions, one should be cautious not to let modern ideas displace the Cro-Magnon conceptions being deciphered. The mythological consciousness has a peculiar way of thinking. People could also reason like this: one dies losing blood, because the earth god drains the blood

⁷⁹ The Torah warns against consuming blood, "for blood is the soul."

which attracts him owing to its red color. Various peoples practised drinking or immolating blood; blood offered to a deity was not infrequently poured onto the ground and was sometimes powdered with soil.

Ancient people long ago observed that the liver stores blood; hence sacred properties were ascribed to the liver. An Armenian word which originally meant 'liver' acquired the meaning of 'heart,' Lithuanian folklore motifs suggest that people once associated sensual love with the liver. According to a popular Armenian belief, evil spirits may damage one's liver, want to devour it, take it away, etc. The folklore (and, unfortunately, recent facts, too) of some Eastern Asian nations tell of a ritual of eating the human liver. The Hittites and Abkhazians immolated animal livers to their deities. The Etruscans used livers for telling fortunes. The Bible reads that Nebuchadnezzar tried to predict the outcome of his campaign against Jerusalem with the help of a liver. Special requirements for cooking liver for food are apparently connected with the sacralization of the organ. The Jewish custom recommends grilling liver by holding it over the fire. The famous Caucasian shashlik recipe was assimilated from the Alans who migrated to the mountains and who, while still steppe residents, thus cooked liver over a bonfire. The Russian word for 'liver' (*pečen*) is a derivative of *peč* ('bake') (cf. the Lithuanian *kėpenos* ('liver') and *kepti* ('bake')).

Before we conclude this chapter let us discuss some etymological presumptions.

In the Nostratic language reconstructed by linguists, a hypothetical parent language to which known modern and ancient Eurasian languages can be traced and which can be dated as Mesolithic, **ili* means 'deer,' **li* stands for 'burn, blaze,' **jela* for 'bright-colored' [210a, pp. 272, 276, 281]. These words are phonetically similar. It is possible that they go back to an even older, Paleolithic protoform. This possibility is corroborated by the propinquity of the notions 'deer,' 'sun,' and 'fire' reflected in the myth.⁸⁰ Phonetically close to the above Nostratic words are also **ela* ('live') and *(h)*jela* ('exist, be') [210a, p. 267]. The semantic relationship between all these words is understandable: the underworld god (like the heaven goddess) was considered the source of life on earth and generally of all nature.

The Neolithic underworld god must have had similar names, if one recalls that the Semitic supreme deity was called *el*, *il*, *ilu*. The Egyptian *ialu* was an appellation of the abode of the dead, the hereafter. The moon god of southern Arabs was referred to as *Il*, *Ilat* (i.e., *il+it*) was the mother goddess of the pagan Arabs. Greeks in the archaic period sacrificed children to the god *Hlos* (undoubtedly the future *Helios*). In another Greek pronunciation, *Ilos* is the deity of darkness. *Il* in Greek legends was the founder of the city of Ilium (ancient Troy). The Hittian *il* and the Hittite *ila* mean 'god.' *Illa* is a cult designation of fire used by South American natives. Tasmanian words for fire, sun, and moon contain the particle *la*. Traditions of the Fulah people in Africa mention a mythical ancestor named *Ilo* (Elo) the Redskin; the Fulah believe that *Ilo*

⁸⁰ V. Ivanov believes that the Proto-Indo-European **el* ('deer') stems from a word meaning 'red-brown, red,' because the deer hunted during the Mesolithic presumably had a hide of that color [108, p. 517].

was a twin brother of a huge serpent which emerged from the ocean and was a protector of cows. In Babylonia, *Ilu* was an archaic supreme deity; the heaven god *Anu* (the Sumerian *An*) overthrew him and sent him to the underworld. In a Hurrian myth, *Anu* dislodged *Alalu* after the latter's nine years reign in heaven (the number nine is consistently associated with the image of the underworld god). The Hattian *Leluwani* is the underworld deity. The Hittite *Illuyanka* is a dragon or serpent-like demon. *Lile* is a regularly recurring word in a Georgian ritual song; this is presumably the same *Il*, *Alalu*. The Hebrew *'elil* ('idol') is held to be related to the word *'el* ('god'). The Sumerian *Enlil* is the name of the god of the upper universe; *lil* is the Sumerian for 'wind' (the wind being an attribute of the thundergod and underworld god).

The Latin word *hēlix* ('spiral') correlates semantically with the above names, and the spiral is a conventional designation of the snake. This sequence of terms can be extended to include, in particular, the Teutonic (i.e., Germanic) *heli*, *heilig* ('sacred, holy'), the Philippine wind demon's name *Alan* [730a, p. 61], and perhaps the ethnonyms *'ellen* (ancient Greek) and *alan*.⁸¹ In old Italy and France some dog breeds were called *alan* (derived from the corresponding Latin word which, in turn, was borrowed by the ancient Romans from Oriental peoples).

Proceeding from the reconstruction of the pre-Indo-European cosmological conception discussed in this chapter, the sun was looked upon as something essentially underworld, rather than celestial. This point of view may be based on the notion that the underworld is a fire element, the sun being a fragment of subterranean fire rising to the sky for a limited period of time. If this is so, the name of the Greek sun god *Helios*, the name of the Germanic underworld goddess *Hela*, *Helde*, *Holde*, and the Teutonic *hell* are from the same root, which meant 'fire' or 'to burn, blaze.' Germanic tribes were not the only users of the corresponding term among the pagan populations of Europe: one of the deities venerated by the pagan Poles was named *Hely* [475, p. 397].

Greek mythology mentions, in addition to *Helios*, several names which are obviously linked with the pre-Indo-European underworld and sun deities. For example, *Helle* in ancient Greek tradition is the name of a maiden who perished upon falling from the sky into the sea. *Helenos* is a mythical prophetic personage (prophetic powers were attributed to the underworld god). *Helen* is the name of the sister of the *Dioscuri*, the divine twin brothers. There is evidence suggesting that the Twins were the sons of the Great Goddess; if so, *Helen* must be her daughter, i.e., the pre-Greek sun goddess. This *Helen* was sometimes depicted as a dog [778b, p. 516]; both the sun and the dog were associated in pre-Indo-European mythology with the underworld.

Another personage of Greek myths bearing the name *Helen* was the daughter of *Zeus* and *Leda*. Married to *Menelaus*, the king of *Sparta*, she was abducted by *Paris*⁸² of *Troy*, an act that brought about the *Trojan*

⁸¹ The Alans (Alanians) or Yasses were an Iranian-language people who inhabited the Southern Russian steppes during the first millennium C.E.

war. *Helen* was revered in *Sparta* as a goddess, she was sometimes identified with *Artemis*, and her cult involved veneration of trees [787, p. 458]; these characteristics make it possible to picture her as descending from the Neolithic Great Goddess. The Greeks had yet another, third, *Helen*, abducted by *Theseus*. The abduction of the *Helens* points to their original connection with the older sun goddess, as do their names. Let us remember that the young deer in the Georgian fairy tale languished for love of Beautiful *Helen*.

The names of deities stemming from the pre-Indo-European word denoting fire, and corresponding names and terms of early farming mythology, were assimilated by Caucasians, as well as by Semites and Indo-Europeans. Thus, *el* in the mythology of the *Vainakh* people designates the underworld of the dead ruled over by the god *Elda*. *Elda*'s specific features testify that this image can be traced back to the early farmers' underworld god: he is wise, possesses prophetic powers, and shakes the earth.

Numerous data show that the Neolithic earth god, who could rise into the sky, eventually split into two deities: underground and celestial. This is probably why in *Vainakh* mythology there is another personage who, judging by his characteristics and name, descends from the Neolithic netherworld god, though in the latter's heavenly manifestation. This is *Hal'erdä*, which means 'god *Hal*.' This name correlates with that of the *Ossetian* goddess *Alardä* [12, p. 396] who has a number of features pointing to her origin in the Neolithic Great Goddess.⁸³ *Hal'erdä* inspired awe; he was regarded as the "deity of heavenly fire" [12, p. 393], a patron of childbirth, and at the same time a cruel avenger; his wrath was dreaded. This strongly resembles the characteristics of the Neolithic underworld god. The *Ingushes* and *Daghestanians* had a prayer refrain *helai*, which was probably the way of addressing the deity *Hal* (or **Hel*). It is noteworthy in this connection that classic authors of antiquity mention a tribe *Heli* (or *Gheli*) in *Daghestan*; an ethnic group of the same name lives in Northern Iran. A *Chechen* tribe was referred to as *Gala* (hence the present names: *Galaški* village, *Galančoz* Lake), the *Ingushi* ethnonym being *Galgai*.⁸⁴ There are villages in *Daghestan* bearing the names *Gheli*, *Huli*, *Heli*, etc. *Hila* is the *Chechen* for 'horse'; and the horse, as will be shown in the next chapter, was a creature associated with the underworld.

In virtue of the possible phonetic transition *g/h*, it appears justified (semantically, at any rate) to add the Latin *gallus* to the sequence of names and terms analyzed here. This word had the following meanings: a Gaul; *Cybele*'s priest; and a rooster (a creature associated with the under-

⁸² The name *Paris* is obviously connected with the common name of the underworld god with *b.r* as the root (see chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net").

⁸³ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

⁸⁴ *Galgai* is the Hebrew for 'wheel.' There was a sacred town called *Gilgal* in Ancient Israel. This by no means implies that the *Ingushes* are descendants of the ancient Hebrews, yet this is hardly a coincidence. Early medieval Armenian written sources mention a *Gargar* tribe in a province at the junction of contemporary Armenia and Azerbaijan; there is a toponym *Gargara* in Asia Minor. The Hittite *galgal* and there is a Sanskrit *gargara* mean 'musical instrument'; note that the underworld god was a patron of music.

world god⁸⁵). The sequence may be extended by the names of mythological personages: Gallu, the malicious Sumerian underworld demon and the spirit of thunderstorm; Ghelu, ■ demon in Rumanian fairy tales who carries off children. Garuda in India is ■ mythical bird which kills children.

Also belonging here seem to be Nostratic words denoting 'dawn,' **gehra* and **gohir* [210a, pp. 228, 230] (the availability of two words for this phenomenon of nature can be accounted for by its mythicization; this is probably also the reason for the existence of several words for 'fire' in the Nostratic language).

⁸⁵V. Ivanov maintains that this appellation for the rooster descends from a word meaning 'shout, raise one's voice.' But could this not be the other way about?

THE SUN HORSE AND THE SUN BOAT

In popular Iranian beliefs, the horse is ■ incarnation of a deity; sacrifices are offered to the horse, lamps are lit in its honor, a special meal is prepared for it [154, p. 40]. Deification of the horse, appearing in time immemorial, continued until quite recently in Iran despite the negative attitude of Zoroastrianism to the horse image. This is but one example of widespread veneration of the horse. The reasons for horse veneration by various peoples both at the dawn of human culture and in later times are obscure.

Images of the horse as well as of the bison or urus the wild ox predominated in Paleolithic art. The Paleolithic image of the bison was the forerunner of the Neolithic mythicization of the bull. It is, however, difficult to judge the meaning of Paleolithic horse portrayals. Some of them could have been related to hunting magic. But this does not apply to all of them. Many students of Paleolithic art regard the opinion that animal images were elements of witchcraft with skepticism. Enigmatic Paleolithic objects with ■ aperture most commonly bear engravings of ■ stallion, a human male, or ■ phallus. The aperture may symbolize the female reproductive organ.⁸⁶ Taking into account the fact that stallion, human male, or phallus were depicted on objects with an orifice, one ■ assume that the Paleolithic horse image symbolized masculinity.⁸⁷

The horse was first domesticated by Proto-Indo-Europeans: the earliest archeological signs of its domestication are associated with settlers of the steppe north of the Black and Caspian Seas in the fourth millennium B.C., i.e., the tribes of the Kurgan, or "ancient-pit" culture, believed

⁸⁶There are "sacred stones" in India with apertures large enough for ■ man to wriggle through; whoever passed through such an opening ■ regarded ■ "born anew" [865, p. 62].

⁸⁷One of the authors advocating the positivistic interpretation of ancient symbols, rites, and objects with unclear functions alleges that Paleolithic "batons" with apertures were implements for straightening darts. Leaving aside the question of how such an instrument could straighten a curved stick, we will point out that such an object was ■ accessory of the Mayan god of evil Tescatlipok (the origin of the "god of evil" has by now become clearer: it is the Neolithic and Paleolithic

Etymologically connected with the names 'el, 'il, 'ilu are most probably these words: the Russian *želtý* ('yellow'); English *yellow*, Lithuanian *geltas*, Sanskrit *haris* ('yellow'); the Russian *zoloto*, Lithuanian *želtas*, and Sanskrit *hizanyam* for 'gold'; the Russian *zelený* ('green'), *zola* ('ashes'), Lithuanian *žilas* ('gray-haired'), and Latvian *zils* ('blue'). The semantic relationship between these words, on the one hand, and the name of the underworld god, on the other, can be accounted for by the belief that the latter was the owner of treasures, in particular, gold, hidden in the earth's interior; gold (and the sun) are yellow; the god was also regarded as the father of terrestrial vegetation (hence green); he was pictured as an old man (gray hair) or as the moon (light gray), could ascend to the sky (blue), and ashes were the product of fire, his element.

to be the ancestors of the present-day European peoples. This ethnic group probably used the cultic horse symbol: archeological monuments of the Kurgan culture (which is, generally speaking, poor in artifacts) include ■ wand or scepter crowned with a stone horse head; ■ ritual interment of a horse head has been uncovered. No evidence, however, sheds light on the meaning of the horse image in the mythology of Proto-Indo-Europeans.

The essentially Indo-European horse veneration current in the third to second millennia B.C. can be stated, yet the content of the corresponding cult conception remains unknown. Although horse veneration and even familiarity with the horse were nowhere to be found among early farming tribes, and despite the fact that Indo-Europeans continued to monopolize horse breeding during the Bronze Age, myths and rites available to interpretation involve the horse image the meaning of which is associated with early farming (i.e., originally non-Indo-European) religious conceptions. There may be two alternative reasons for this.

1) Cult-mythological notions concerning the donkey were transposed onto the horse; the present unfriendly attitude to the donkey is not due to any negative qualities the animal may possess (in this respect it is no worse and no better than any other animal), but because it used to represent a vicious deity that was later rejected. In antiquity, the donkey was regarded as both divine and demonic. In Ancient Iran, the donkey was venerated in carnivals dedicated to the spring awakening of nature. In Babylon, the deceased were accompanied to the "abode of the dead" by a donkey. The thundergod in the Rig-Veda is seen as a donkey. In an Indian myth, a donkey turns everything it eats into gold. The Greeks associated the donkey with Hephaestus, Priapus, and Dionysus [232, p. 36]. The Daghestanians remember the notion of a connection between the donkey and rain [370, p. 77]. In Egypt, the donkey was dedicated to Seth (whose prototype was the Neolithic underworld god). In Jewish tradition the donkey is considered an incarnation of wickedness, perfidy, and wisdom (all these being characteristics of the underworld god). The coincidence in the Hebrew language

of the appellations for the donkey and for wine is not necessarily accidental. Names for the horse (Hurrian *ešši*, Hebrew *sūs*, Egyptian *šm.t*, Caucasian *ačua*, *ču*) and names for the donkey (Sumerian *anšu*, Egyptian *šu*, Latin *asinus*, Russian *osiol*) are related. It is possible that variants of these words, starting with a vowel, derive from the word **an-su* which may be translated as 'heavenly man.' The second part of this hypothetical term is reflected, for example, in the Sanskrit *sū* ('produce, generate') and in the Ossetian *sūs* ('phallus'). The donkey probably came to be associated with the underworld god, regarded as an embodiment of virility, because it is such an expressly phallic animal. T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov, in terms of their positivistic approach, maintain that the cult significance of the donkey was due to the fact that it was "an important household animal" [108, p. 564]. But this does not account for the fact that words such as the Sanskrit *ásurah* ('sir, master') and the Hittite *haššuš* ('king') derive from names for the donkey; nor does it explain why the donkey in Hittite mythology impregnated the queen, while in Ancient India the donkey was considered an incarnation of the deity of death.

2) The horse was given the cult and mythological characteristics of the deer. In the Altai mountains, inside the famous Pazyryk mound, horses were discovered harnessed to a hearse. They wore golden deer masks with antlers — the ritual had to comply with archaic traditions" [474, p. 7]. Some Caucasian artifacts of the Bronze Age feature horse images with deer antlers (sometimes three of them) [354, p. 29]. Lithuanian myths mention ■ horse with deer hooves [759, p. 94]. The horse and the deer, or elk, are identified in the Finnish epic Kalevala [290b, p. 238]. Epics of various peoples endow ■ mythical horse with the same characteristics as the golden-antlered deer [341, p. 73]. Apparently the belief in ■ deer which devours snakes is connected with the image of the snake-killing horse [365, p. 229]. The folkloric deer and horse are also endowed with bird-like qualities [240, p. 100]; this is because the wondrous deer is pictured as dashing across the sky; this notion was subsequently transposed onto the mythical horse. The winged horse is not exclusive to Greek mythology; it is known to the Daghestanians (Fig. 393: 3) and other Northern Caucasian peoples; it also figures in Russian folk art [149, p. 475; 594, p. 117] and in Iranian legends; a popular Iranian tradition tells of horses with wings invisible to humans.

The name Pegasus, the winged horse of the ancient Greeks, indicates that it was in origin an infernal creature. The name is etymologically related to the Greek *pege* ('water spring'); springs and rivers were associated with the serpent of the earth's depths.⁸⁸ The proto-Slavic **pekala* means 'devil' (this word is preserved in the Ukrainian language, where it means 'hell'). The Hebrew *pega* denotes 'misfortune, damage.' In the mythology of the Baltic nations, Pekols or Pikulas is the underworld god. Peko ■ an Estonian deity of the harvest and protector of the home; he was referred to as "king of the earth" and was portrayed with an emphasized male organ [371, p. 296].

Having replaced the deer, the horse turned into an animal

⁸⁸See chapter "Snake-Water."

to which the function of accompanying the deceased to the abode of the dead was assigned. Numerous Scythian interments contain horse remains. This rite also existed among ancient Germanic tribes and the French during the Middle Ages [758, p. 235]. The Celts believed that the souls of the dead were driven by horses to the other world. It transpires from the above that all the peoples mentioned buried the horse together with its owner not because it was supposed to serve its master in the afterlife, but in order to ensure transportation of the deceased to the underworld. The following detail is to be noted: some horses in Scythian burial mounds display certain congenital defects (deformities) [56, p. 37]. In ancient beliefs deformities were explained as a divine seal. The notion goes back to Paleolithic times: in the archeological complex near the village of Malta (Siberia) the child furnished with ■ abundance of amulets and carefully buried under the floor of the dwelling was deformed.

The Ossets and some other North Caucasian peoples used to practise a rite referred to in ethnographic literature ■ "dedicating the horse to the deceased." Authors describing this custom not infrequently qualify it ■ specifically Caucasian. However, "the Rig-Veda hymn glorifying the horse has much in common with the speech delivered by an Ossetian horse conferrer: the horse is requested to bear the deceased safely to his forefathers" [272, p. 72]. Some Caucasian peoples concluded funerals with horse races; such ■ ritual was also practised in Ancient Rome and in Greece [366, p. 16]. The horse also played a symbolic role in the funerary rites of the Etruscans.

Not only did the horse "carry" the deceased to the abode of the dead. Like its predecessor, the deer, it was conceived as representing the abode of the dead. Common popular beliefs across Europe associated the horse with death, with the chthonic deities, with the lord of the underworld, with the devil [758, pp. 196-214]. These facts have long been common knowledge. Yet V. Propp, who is of the opinion that "it is useless to argue" with advocates of the mythological trend, tries to find "historical roots" for the images of the winged and fire-spitting horse [439, p. 159], while S. Tokarev, speaking of "the attitude to the horse as ■ demonic creature connected with evil spirits," explains it thus: "For the Ukrainian peasant, unlike the Russians and Belorussians, the ox, rather than the horse, was the principal work animal. For him the horse was associated with the landowners: Polish mounted gentry trampled his crops and robbed him too" [521, p. 57].

Proceeding from testimony in the writings of classical Greek and Roman authors and from modern ethnographic data, one can see that the horse was regarded as a chthonic creature; for this reason, and not because of its economic and domestic role, it was portrayed on gravestones. The ominous nature of the horse image can be inferred from ancient popular beliefs which attributed to the horse (as well as the dog) the power to portend death; it was believed that ■ red horse seen in ■ dream was an indubitable sign of approaching death; the horse was considered an attribute of the Greek underworld god 'Aides (Hades) and of the Babylonian underworld goddess Erishkigal [240, pp. 107-172]. Since the horse was connected with the lord of the realm of the dead, it assumed some of

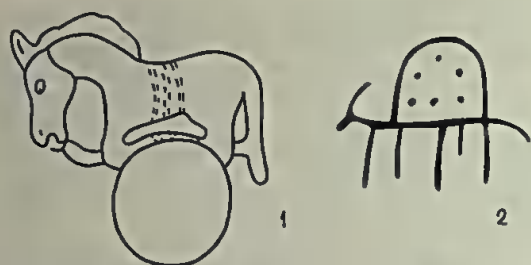


Fig. 64. Horse with solar sign: 1 — Siberia, ca 500 CE [575, p. 257]; 2 — Daghestan, rock wall painting near Trisanchi [141, p. 101].

his characteristics; for example, the horse was believed to possess prophetic powers. From the conviction that structures cannot survive on the ground unless the earth god approves, ancient people sacrificed a horse and buried its head under the foundation before they started building; this custom was common among many Eurasian nations.

The horse replaced the deer not only as a creature leading the dead to the underworld. An archaic myth of the sun deer led to the notion of the sun horse. In myths of Indo-European and other peoples, including those of the Far East, the horse transports the sun god and is sometimes associated with the sun.

The southern Semites venerated the horse as sacred to the sun goddess. Horses and chariots were dedicated to the sun by ancient Hebrews [411, p. 202]. The Avesta refers to the sun as "fleet-horsed" [778a, p. 127]. The Rig-Veda speaks of the horse-driven sun, the horse appears as an image of the sun, the sun itself is called the horse [829b, p. 17]. In Iran a horse image was raised high as an incarnation of the sun deity Mithra [21, p. 49]. According to Herodotus, the Massagetae (tribes inhabiting the southern Russian steppe in the first half of the first millennium B.C.) sacrificed horses to the sun [487, p. 251]. The custom existed in Ancient Greece [514, p. 429] and in Iran [854, p. 41]. The Greeks and Germans were aware of the semantic relationship between "the horse" and "the sun"; they referred to the sun as a horse [759, p. 93]. Scandinavians used to personify the sun as a horse; the Celts looked upon the horse as an image of the sun [733, p. 154]. "The horse... is associated with the sun, as though replacing it" [471, p. 400] among Slavs. Ancient Indian and Lithuanian myths read that the horse was created from the sun [778, p. 728].

Herodotus explains the horse sacrificing ritual of the Massagetae: "The speediest of the animals is dedicated to the speediest of all gods" (i.e., the sun). Herodotus was mistaken on this point, and so are we when we take a rationalistic approach towards interpreting the meaning of the ritual. The movement of the sun across the sky is by no means swift; the visually perceived velocity of the movement of the sun could not suggest any association with a running horse. The definition "speediest of all gods" does not reflect the actual property of the object. The above explanation reduces to a logically closed circle: the horse is dedicated to the sun god because he is the swiftest of all gods, and he is the swiftest because he rides the horse.

Thus, both the horse and the deer in ancient beliefs were associated with the underworld and with the sun. However,



Fig. 65. Horse and sun symbol: 1, 2 — Mesopotamia, 700–500 BC [687, p. 190; 215, fig. 272]; 3, 4 — signs on stone masonry, Daghestan, villages of Somoda and Musruk.

the mythological image of the deer was primary and can therefore be definitely reconstructed: the deer is an infernal animal transporting the sun. The horse image is secondary and controversial: in some cases the horse represents the sun deity, in others the infernal deity. Therefore if Russian fairy tales deal with fire-spitting horses, and Serbian songs call the horse "fiery", it is impossible to say specifically what these horses represent, the fiery Gehenna or the heavenly fire. Horse figurines in Russia were painted red; the color is originally associated with the underworld, although it can also be conceived as the color of the rising sun.

The relationship between the images of the horse and of the sun is evidenced by ancient designs (Fig. 64). Other pictures show that the images of the horse and the sun could be interchangeable. For example, in pictures showing scenes of worshiping the "celestial pair" — the Sun and the Moon (Fig. 65: 1, 2) — one can observe that the solar disk and the horse head are identical in significance. Daghestanian carved stones sometimes depict a hand with a cross on it (which may be thought of as a sun sign); a representation of a hand with a horse seems analogous to this ideograph (Fig. 65: 3, 4). It must be noted, though, that the cross became a symbol of the sun god in the Bronze Age; in the earlier Neolithic religion, it was a symbol of the underworld god.⁸⁹ Consequently, the Daghestanian images of the hand with the cross can refer with equal probability to either of these deities.

In medieval Armenia and Georgia memorial gravestones were sometimes sculptured like horse figures, in Daghestan and in Greece — in the shape of a horse head. Similarly, in Lithuania, ancient tombstones have been found crowned with horse-head images [693, p. 41]. Ancient Roman and medieval Daghestanian stelae often portray a rider. In all these cases we are dealing with the symbolic horse that was expected to transport the deceased to the other world. This horse was related to the deity and had never carried the person on its back during his lifetime, it never pulled his

⁸⁹ See chapter "The Four Directions."

cart, and never drew his plow.

Linguistic connections of the notion "horse" are of interest.

The Germanic words *horse*, *ross* seem to be related to the Latin *ursus* ("bear"), *urus* ("bull") and ancient Egyptian *rt* ("snake"). This assumption may appear farfetched on the face of it, but it will be shown in due time that the bear, like the horse and the bull, was associated with the image of the underworld god.

A. Famintsyn once pointed out that the English *horse* and the German *Ross* are similar to the name of the god *Hors* mentioned in medieval Russian sources [541, pp. 199–201]. A deity with such a name could be worshiped not only by eastern Slavs, but also their southern neighbors, judging by the names of the ancient cities Korsun (Chersonesus) in the Crimea and Kars in Armenia, as well as by their northern neighbors, as is evidenced by the name of the Baltic tribe Kors. An opinion has been voiced that *Hors* could be a sun deity. This, however, is not proved. Classical Greek and Roman sources mention *Horc* as one of the names of the underworld god, known in Italian superstitions as the demonic horse Orco [240, p. 109]. A horse as well as a ferry are attributes of the Greek Charon (Haron).

Thus the mythicized image of the horse was associated both with the sun and with the underworld. The sun and the underworld themselves were interrelated. In the preceding chapter we noted that the name of the Greek sun god *Helios* is etymologically related to the word designating hell; the chapter "The White God" lists similar examples.

A. Famintsyn suggested that the name of the deity, a variation of the words *Hors*, *horse*, or *Ross*, might perhaps have been an eponym that produced the ethnonym *ross* (*Rus*) [541, pp. 202–206]. Different views have been expressed concerning the origin of this ethnonym, starting from information in the Old Russian chronicle that it was borrowed from the Varangians. The Varangian version found adherents well into the nineteenth century. Soviet historians have rejected it point blank. As a matter of fact, the existence of *Rus* along the Dnieper River was known before the Normans got there. The ethnonym *Ros* as confined to this region was mentioned in a fourth century Syrian source [161, p. 87]. It is also recorded in a Syrian source dating from the end of the sixth century, though in a somewhat different form: *hros* [161, p. 84]. A. Diakonov, the author of the article containing this information, thought that the letter *h* in the word *hros* appeared as a result of a slip of the pen or some other reason. But we can see, this form of the ethnonym confirms the hypothesis that it was connected with the name of a deity.

On the other hand, the term *ros*, *rus* was also known in medieval Scandinavia [543c, p. 522]. This is a case of coincidence of ethnonyms among different, unrelated peoples, which is not uncommon. Religious beliefs could spread over large areas and involve different peoples, so that they worshiped the same deities.

Medieval Arab, Byzantine, and Western European authors not infrequently referred to eastern Slavs and to Russes as two different peoples [243, p. 115]. This problem will not be dealt with here. We only wish to remark that a deity's name could become an eponym from which the

name of the ethnos and of the corresponding country might derive. This phenomenon is not unique; for example, the Chaldeans' (Urartu) main god was called Chaldi (Haldi), the Assyrians' — Assur, the Hurrians' — Hurri, the Amorites' — Amurru, the Kassites' — Kassu, and so on.

The hypothetical name of the deity *Ross/Rus* could have provided the name for pagan festivities *rusalii*, as they were known to eastern and southern Slavs, Rumanians, Albanians, and Greeks. *Rusalii* were festive rites lasting from the 1st of May to the 22nd of June; the major part of these rites fell on the seventh week following Easter (the *rusalian* week), concluded by Whitsun, known in Catholicism as *rosata*, *rosarum*, *rosalia* [473, pp. 95–97; 521, p. 89]. Eastern Slavs held that these festivities were dedicated to *Rusalka* (a mermaid, a nymph).

We will conclude this linguistic digression by pointing out that while the terms *Ross/Rus* and *rusalii* show their connection, on the one hand, with the name *Hors* or related names, on the other hand they are cognate with Indo-European words designating moisture, such as the Sanskrit *rasa* ("water"), Celtic *rus*, *ros* ("lake, pond"), Latin *ros* ("dew"), and Russian *orošat*, *ruslo* ("irrigate, river-bed").

The point is that the lord of the lower universe ruled over both fire and nether, earthly waters (the heaven goddess was responsible for the heavenly, upper waters). The primitive myth about the origin of the world from a split egg reflected the elementary conception of the world's binary structure: it consists of two parts — lower and upper. The upper part is heaven and the heavenly waters, the lower is earth and the terrestrial waters. Earth and its waters were pictured as a certain common element. The god that was a serpent, whether subterranean or a sea-dweller, was its lord; for example, the Ocean in Hittite-Hurrian mythology corresponds to the lower world deity [190, pp. 54, 263].

As the mythical deer issued from the underworld, the horse which superseded it assumed its relationships with the nether regions of the universe, in particular, with the nether waters, i.e., seas, rivers, etc.: Indra's horse ascended from the sea, the winged horse of the Armenian epic was brought up from the sea bottom, a Lithuanian song relates that the marvellous horse rose from the water, an Altaic epic tells of a horse created by the "spirit of the water" [56, p. 36], in pagan Slavic rites the horse is associated with water bodies. Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, was offered horses and harnesses as sacrifices; he himself was pictured as riding on horseback or in a chariot, and was called "equestrian" [758, pp. 181, 186].

Not only the souls of the deceased, but the sun, too, retired to the world of darkness located "beyond the sea." A verse in a Lithuanian song says: "The sun's daughter goes into the sea, the crown of her head alone can be seen; the son of the god sails in his boat and rescues the sun" [829b, p. 399]. These words reflect both the pre-Indo-European conception of the sun at the mercy of the lord of the nether regions, and the Indo-European myth of the hero who rescues the sun.

The Greek legend about the glorious ship *Argo* which slipped past two hazardous clashing cliffs echoes an older myth about a hero who penetrated into the underworld through a gaping opening to release the sun from captivity.

The Aztecs also believed that in order to reach the underworld, the deceased had to pass between two cliffs which drew together [829b, p. 25].

The setting sun sank into the ground or into the sea. In either case, according to pre-Indo-European beliefs, it went to the lord of the nether regions, i.e., of earth and earthly waters. The entrance to the other world was somewhere in the west, beyond the \square . Before the souls of the dead could reach the abode of the dead, they had to cover an expanse of water, as the myths of many peoples attest [28, p. 179]. These notions gave rise to funerary rites such as burial in \square boat launched into the open sea, or interment with a boat, or laying \square boat-shaped tombstone over the grave [28, pp. 152-167].

The boat conveying the deceased to the abode of the dead came to be looked upon as the underworld god's appurtenance. This must have inspired Egyptian portrayals of a sacred boat transporting a snake [616, p. 74]. In Greek festivals in honor of Dionysus, whose characteristics were similar to those of the earth god, his image was carried in boats mounted on wheels. In Ancient Egypt, priests carried a sacred boat on their shoulders during religious festivals. These ancient rites lie behind the emergence of the boat on wheels, an accessory of the Western European carnival, a festival which was once dedicated to the awakening of the earth god after hibernation.

As an attribute of the underworld god, the boat acquired the significance of a cult object. This, rather than the development of seafaring, inspired the numerous graphical and sculptural boat representations preserved in archeological monuments of the Neolithic and Bronze periods. The boat was a sacred object in the funerary rites not only of Scandinavians and Oceanians, but also of Egyptians, to whom the boat was never of enough practical importance to elevate it to the role of a cult object.

Yet another function was attributed to the boat in myths.

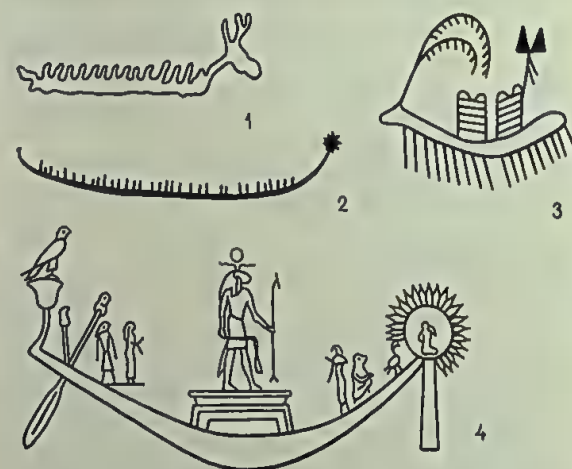


Fig. 66. Origin of sun bark: 1 — Karelia, ca 2500 BC [290b, p. 237]; 2 — Azerbaijan, ca 2000 BC [552, p. 43]; 3 — Egypt, ca 3500 BC [794, pl. 19]; 4 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [616, p. 46].

As it conveyed the dead to the underworld, while the deer carried the sun which subsequently itself entered the underworld, there emerged the notion of a boat transporting the sun. A Lithuanian song notes the sun riding horses or the sun. A Lithuanian song notes the sun sailing a boat. The Rig-Veda speaks of the sun sailing a boat. According to ancient Greek beliefs, Helios [778, p. 654]. According to ancient Greek beliefs, Helios sleeps in \square boat at night. Ancient representations of the sun boat, associated with beliefs going back to the Neolithic, have also been found in Egypt and in Scandinavia. Thus, the Egyptian cosmogonic pattern according to which the sun sails across the sky in \square boat during the day, and down \square subterranean river in another boat at night, is a common ancient concept.

The sun sails in a boat, the sun rides on the antlers of \square deer... This results in the strange theme of a deer with golden antlers swimming in the sea [597, p. 221]. This deer-boat or elk-boat is engraved on rocks in Karelia and on funerary vessels of prehistoric Egypt (Fig. 66: 1, 3). The first of these designs displays strokes in the boat, designating the souls of the dead embarking on their journey to the realm of the dead [290b, p. 237]; the second depicts \square private funeral boat.

The boat conveying the souls of the dead to the underworld, the mythical boat sailing the waters and flying in the sky, returned thousands of years later in the Western European legend of the Flying Dutchman, the ship with dead men for a crew. The legend about the spectral ship was known outside Europe, as far away as Indonesia. Even in Oceania, a belief existed that the deceased retire with the setting sun in \square "sun boat" [671, p. 137].

The notion of \square ship of the dead fits the notion of the mythical animal conveying the deceased to the other world. The deer or elk was believed to be such \square creature in Eurasia; for that reason an elk head is portrayed at the prows of funerary boats painted on rocks in Scandinavia and Karelia (Fig. 66: 1). The bows of the "boat of the dead" sometimes carried a horse protome. Deer were unknown in Egypt, as were horses until the second millennium B.C.; deer antlers, strange to the Egyptians, were therefore transformed to resemble the horns of another animal — the goat, which also represented the earth deity (Fig. 66: 3). Ancient Cretan portrayals exist of boats with dog protomes [616, p. 3]. Mythical boats also sometimes bore snake protomes (Fig. 82: 2).⁹⁰

But most common in Neolithic beliefs was the deer which transported the dead from this world to the other, as the deer was the personage of the myth about the sun's daylight path and subsequent setting. Implementing this function, the deer became associated with the sun itself. For this reason the sun image replaced the chthonic animal protome on the bows of the spectral ship (Fig. 66: 2, 4).

Such was the origin of the "sun boat" glorified by ancient Egyptian myths and by Bronze-Age Eurasian images.

⁹⁰ Ancient Peruvian monuments also bear images of boats with protomes in the shape of mythical serpent monsters at both ends [569, p. 210].

THE BULL-MOON

It is generally believed that the lively figurative art of the Paleolithic era was, so to speak, of an intrinsically utilitarian nature: animal pictures served as magic means of ensuring a successful hunt, female designs were supposed to favor childbirth, and so on. However, many images among Paleolithic art monuments can hardly be interpreted in such a way. They include, in particular, figures shaped half like a man and half like an animal, for example, an anthropomorphic bull (Fig. 67: 1-2). This image also existed in the Mesolithic [788, p. 116].

Minoan artifacts testify to the ritual significance of the bull in Ancient Crete. Images of \square bull head, obviously cultic and symbolic in nature, are encountered among monuments of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture, whose art is essentially akin to that of Ancient Crete. The black bull Hapi (Apis in the Greek tradition) was particularly esteemed in Ancient Egypt. Other divine bull cults were also practised in Egypt. Excavations of an early farming settlement in Asia Minor (Çatal-Hüyük) dating from the seventh to sixth millennia B.C. have revealed sanctuaries in which the sculptured bull head was an indispensable feature (Fig. 67: 4). Bull heads were sometimes arranged in rows, like bull skulls in the old living quarters of highland Daghestan. Bull-head shaped bronze amulets have been found in Daghestan (Fig. 67: 6), where even now one can occasionally come across bull skulls hanging on façades of buildings, as in Ancient Greece, where bull heads, in the course of time carved in stone, became \square architectural decorative feature — bucrania. Indonesian buildings were decorated with bull skulls and sculptured images of bull heads. Pagan Celts venerated the bull [814, p. 302]; the bull head was of sacral significance in Slavic paganism [120, p. 23]. In Svanetia (highland Georgia) ritual bread was baked in the shape of a bull's head, considered as an emblem of the "great deity" [486, p. 44]. *Hari* is the Georgian for 'bull,' which resembles the name of the Hurrian divine bull Hurri.

Monuments of ancient art, traditions, and popular customs of the entire European and Western Asian region provide evidence of past veneration of the bull. What is behind such \square attitude to this animal? Various authors have various answers. The Egyptian cult of Apis, for example, has been accounted for by totemism, of all things [251, p. 31]. In that case, however, the bull would have been \square totemic beast among all peoples inhabiting the territory from Spain to India. Adherents of the naive-rationalistic interpretation of ancient symbols and rites explain the bull veneration by its being the "main aid of the plowman" [582, p. 236]. Yet the bull was revered far back in Paleolithic times when there was no land cultivation or cattle breeding.

The specific content of the mythological images with which human fantasy associated the bull or the cow does not suggest that these images could have emerged in connection with farming. For example, the ancient Greeks sacrificed black bulls to 'Aides, the lord of the underworld. Abkhasians offered a black cow to Ahyn, an awesome, malicious deity revered as a patron of the sea

and armed with \square stick [604, pp. 104-108] (the stick, \square phallic symbol, was a common attribute of mythological personages deriving from the archaic god of the earth and underworld).

In some Indo-European myths the bull is an incarnation of the thundergod; \square epithet of the Sumerian thundergod Ishkur was "the wild bull of ferocity"; even in Africa rain was associated with the bull [371a, pp. 39, 203]; how can this be accounted for from the rationalistic standpoint? An

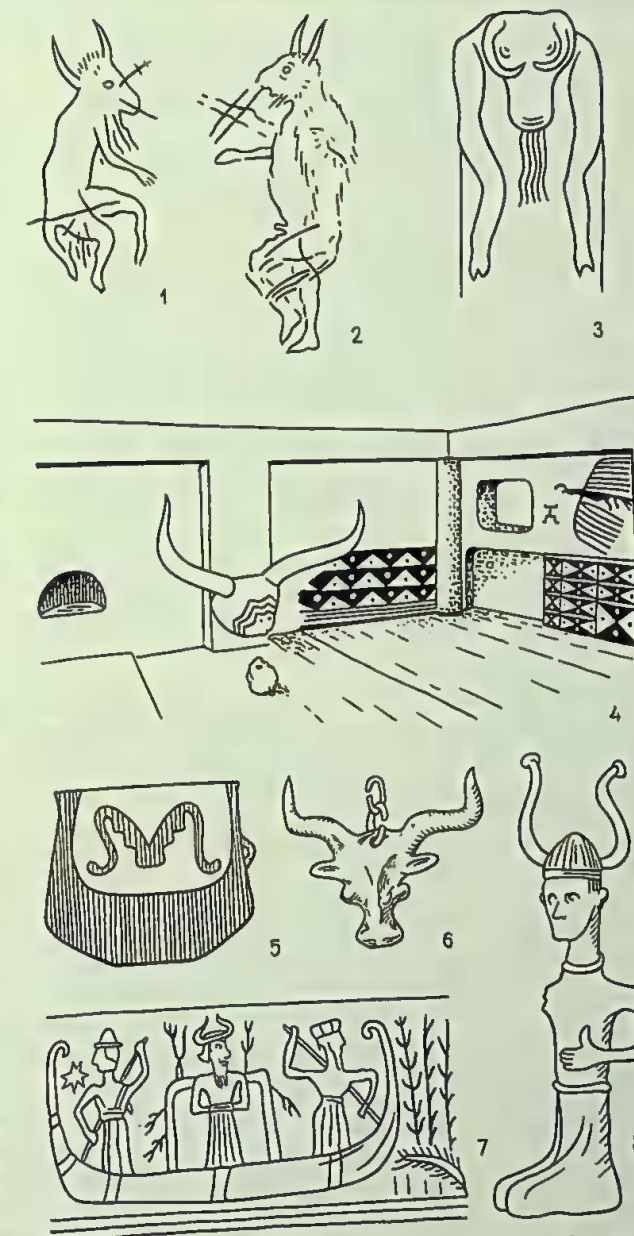


Fig. 67. Cult image of bull: 1, 2 — France and Spain, Paleolithic [6, pl. 27]; 3 — Armenia, ca 2000 BC [423, p. 9]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [762, p. 82]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, p. 339]; 6 — Daghestan, ca 500 BC [35, p. 154]; 7 — Sumer [410, p. 106]; 8 — Denmark, ca 2000 BC [628, p. 149].

ironical remark by F. M. Müller is truly relevant here: if one adopts the simplistic rationalistic approach, the myth of Cronus must have been created by people who devoured their own children [778a, p. 31].

The man-bull image, which first appeared in Western European Paleolithic designs, existed over thousands of years, moving from people to people, from one cultural and historical epoch to another. It is frequent in the art of pre-Aryan India.⁹¹ Everybody knows the Greek legend of the Cretan Minotaur to whom human sacrifices were offered. Humans were sacrificed to Moloch ('lord'), a bull-headed Phoenician idol. Avestan texts mention a man-bull named Gopatshah (shah, i.e., king, lord) who created life on earth.

Immolations, including those of human beings, were dedicated to gods. What kind of god did the bull represent?

The bull in *The Pyramid Texts* was sometimes identified with a snake [766b, pp. 69, 77]. In Russian fairy tales the serpent demands human sacrifice, in this resembling Minotaur and Moloch. In Japanese myths, the cosmic egg was split by a bull rather than by a serpent [730a, p. 259]. European Neolithic monuments bear images of a horned serpent (Fig. 381: 1); the Chinese winged dragon Lung-Van, the lord of the water element and a patron of emperors, was portrayed with horns; the Indonesian horned serpent, lord of the underworld and of the high seas, inflicts wars, epidemics, and other calamities on the world; American Indians have myths about a horned serpent hostile to humankind; a statue of the Peruvian god Kon-Tiki-Virakocha incorporated images of horned snakes [569, p. 98]. All this points to the worldwide notion of affinity or even interchangeability between the mythological serpent and the bull. But the serpent is an incarnation of the underworld. Hence, the bull, too, is relevant to the nether parts of the world. In some myths lightning is represented as a bull [225, p. 41]; but lightning is the fiery serpent of the underworld.

The phylacteries, an important accessory of the Judaic cult, contain four calf hairs. This number is repeatedly associated with the earth deity in traditions rooted in paleocultures. It must be added that the boxes and straps of the phylacteries must be black, and if this color fades with time, it must be re-applied; black is the symbol of the earth god in Neolithic religion.

In all probability, the bull was venerated throughout the Northern Caucasus, and not as a domestic animal, but as an incarnation of a deity. The following considerations support this assumption. 'Bull' is *os* in Kabardinian, *oç* in Avarian, and *is* in Didoan; these words resemble the Kabardinian cult exclamation *assa* and the Ingushian *oç'a*. The river Assa flows in Checheno-Ingushetia (rivers were associated with the deity of the nether universe). The Georgians refer to the Ossets as *Osi*; Russian medieval sources refer to the Alans, ancestors of the Ossets, as *Yasy* (not infrequently a people was named after a deity it worshipped). All these appellations could have derived from

⁹¹ Judging by pictorial representations, in pre-Aryan India the buffalo personified one of two supreme deities (the other was a goddess referred to as "the woman with raised hands"). The god was sometimes represented as a male figure with bull horns [96, p. 65, Fig. 5].

the Nostratic **asa* ('fire'), which also produced the Hittite *hašša* ('sacred fire, altar'), ancient Iranian *yazata* ('deity'), Polish *jazé* or *waż* ('serpent'), Russian *yaščer* ('pangolin'), Hebrew *asir* ('rich'; the serpent of the earth's depths possessed incalculable wealth). Perhaps *As*, the name of the giant gods of Icelandic mythology, also belongs in this category (the underworld god was pictured as a giant, as numerous data suggest). A semantic explanation of these similarities is that both the bull and the serpent represented the underworld deity incarnated in fire.

The Ingushi word *ç'a*, similar to the above appellations for the bull, means 'deity,' 'home,' and 'fire.' These meanings of the word were probably due to the notion of the god incarnated in the fire and the serpent as a protector of the home. The phonetic similarity of this word to the name for the bull is testimony that the god was pictured as a bull. Incidentally, the custom of hanging bull skulls on the façade and inside a house can be interpreted as evidence that the earth god was a patron of the home in the image of the bull as well as of the snake. Excavations of Paleolithic dwellings often reveal bull skulls, their position by no means being accidental [171, pp. 441, 474]; apparently, the earth god was a patron of the dwelling so long ago.

Tribes referred to as *Yasy* once inhabited not only the Northern Caucasus and the reaches of the Don River, but also territories such as present-day Bessarabia and eastern Rumania, where there is a town called *Yassy*, and Central Asia, where there is also an ancient town called *Yassy* (now Turkestan). Tribes of this name once populated Asia Minor; the word *Asia* derives from their name. All these peoples apparently worshiped a deity in the image of a bull (or a serpent, which makes no difference).

Ancient portrayals of the bull exist, from which it appears that the animal was associated with the earth (more specifically, with the earth deity). Bull horn representations were accompanied by a serrated design which symbolized the tilled soil, as already stated (Fig. 67: 5), and the bull heads were marked with zigzags (Fig. 67: 4), which must have symbolized irrigation of the soil. A representation of a bull with water issuing from its mouth (Fig. 67:3) seems to be a symbol of earth from which a spring of water issues. As the bull personified the earth god, its image had chthonic significance. Porphyry, a third century Greek author, wrote that according to ancient conceptions, the souls of those committed to the earth belong to the bull [696, p. 182]. It was an ancient custom in Central Asia to inter the deceased wrapped in a bull hide (the deceased "belongs to the bull"). The archaic Egyptian god Bata, venerated in the bull image, was identified with Anubis, the patron of the dead. Neolithic burials with bull skulls are known. Mousterian (Neanderthal) interments contain bull bones arranged in a way that leaves no doubt that they were specially placed there; the cult concept of the dead belonging to the bull seems to have existed already in the time of Neanderthal man.

A Sumerian picture includes a human figure with bull horns set in a frame sprouting plants (Fig. 67: 7). The Sumerian religion differs essentially from the religious attitudes of the early farming cultures, yet both cults exhibit some common features. The Sumerians crowned

the heads of deities with bull horns, a symbol of holiness in general, as later did the Hittites and Babylonians. But since the personage in question is shown sailing in a boat, he must be Enki, the "lord of the abyss" and the "ruler of the waters." Primitive cosmogonic conceptions associated the water element with the earth, and the two were represented by the same mythical creature, usually a serpent. It may therefore be assumed that the image of the Sumerian god Enki evolved from an earlier deity of the nether regions and reflects, to a certain extent, Neolithic notions of the earth deity. The design in which bull-horned Enki is depicted within a plant-producing frame represents him as an earth deity. It is noteworthy that Enki dwells in the subterranean ocean and that the Sumerians, regarding him as the god of elemental waters, still gave him a name meaning 'lord of the earth' (*en-ki*). Enki was revered as a patron of trades, a typical feature of many mythological personages originally related to the Neolithic earth god. Enki was also an incarnation of wisdom, corresponding to the notion of the mythical serpent, the bearer of wisdom. Enlil, the Sumerian supreme god, is also characterized by certain features of the Neolithic serpent: he is the "lord of the winds" and the bestower of rain. It can be construed that Enki and Enlil originated from the "lower" and the "upper" manifestations respectively of the dual god devised by the early farmers.

Fragments of Caucasian myths also point to the mythical bull as associated with both earth and water. The bull of Georgian fairy tales, for example, dwells both in water and in the underworld [486, p. 46]; a Chechenian legend tells about a lake turning into a bull which subsequently assumes its original nature as a lake [367, p. 23].

The earth god being a bull, its spouse, the heaven goddess, must have been a cow. As a matter of fact, Egyptian Hathor and Isis, and Mesopotamian Ishtar, possessing characteristics of the Neolithic Great Goddess, were pictured as half-women and half-cows; Hathor was, among other things, the wife of Apis. The Greek goddesses Hera and Io assumed the appearance of a cow. The relationship between Baal and Anath, the western Semitic supreme god couple, was seen as the copulation of a bull and a cow [802, p. 91]. Indian myths regarded the bull and the cow as progenitors of mankind. The Berbers of North Africa have a similar myth, in which the first mother, pictured as a cow, is referred to as Tamuath, the name clearly reminiscent of Assyro-Babylonian Tiamath [678, p. 9]. The bridegroom and bride in Russian tradition were compared to a bull and a cow [543b, p. 332]. Some myths relate a liaison between a woman and a bull: Zeus in the form of a bull carried off Europa, a Phoenician princess; Pasiphaë, the wife of the Cretan king Minos, fell in love with a bull (and produced Minotaur). Such myths apparently go back to the remotest periods of human culture, judging by a Paleolithic portrayal of a pregnant woman covered by a bull [703, Table 85]. An extremely ancient specimen of figurative engraving from La Ferrassie (France) shows a bull and a vulva on a slab. Archeological studies reveal female statuettes together with bull bones. All this shows that the image of the goddess' consort in the guise of a bull can be traced back to the Paleolithic. The present-day veneration of sacred cows in India is connected with these

ancient cult attitudes. In Indian mythology, the divine cow is a manifestation of a mother-goddess bestowing fertility. The veneration of cows, harking back to pre-Aryan times, is particularly typical of southern, Dravidic India; there is no cult of the cow in the Rig-Veda.

The Neolithic earth god underwent transformation in the Bronze Age, and his characteristics were assimilated by new deities. For this reason the Indian thundergod Indra was sometimes personified as a bull; the Scandinavian thundergod Thor (Tür) was depicted with bull horns (Fig. 67: 8).⁹² Ancient authors associated the bull image with the constellation Sagittarius (the Archer), perhaps because the thundergod was viewed as a warrior. A Hurrian text reads that a divine bull assisted the thundergod in battle; in the given case, as often happened, different properties of the same deity split to characterize separate personages.

The connection between the bull and earth may appear incongruous on the face of it, but there is an explanation. According to Neolithic beliefs (going back in all likelihood to the Paleolithic), earth was represented by a male deity, and the bull, in function of its specific qualities, was a suitable image of male reproductive power. The word "bull" is repeatedly used in the Rig-Veda to designate male sexual potency. It was probably for this reason that the bull was considered an incarnation of fertility.

As the bull personified masculinity, horns came to symbolize virility in a broad sense, which is confirmed by finds of horned ithyphallic statuettes [696, pp. 221, 223] and by bull horns on helmets of Neolithic warriors and medieval knights. In Western Asia, not only gods, but also kings were portrayed with bull horns (Fig. 274: 4). In remote antiquity people not only wore horned headgear, but also shaped their hair like horns. Inhabitants of Central Asia did this as recently as the Middle Ages. Apparently, so also did the Canaanites, for the custom existed among the Hebrews, their successors. Yemenite Jews until the middle of the twentieth century plaited the hair on their temples to stand up like horns. Most narrowly observant Jews grow long earlocks, though they do not comb them erect.

Neolithic materials include horned female figurines. Selene of the Greeks and the Semitic Astarte were depicted with horns. In medieval Western Europe women wore horned headgear; in Iran, Russia, and the mountainous Caucasus, the custom lasted into the nineteenth century.

The bull head in the Çatal-Hüyük sanctuaries is sometimes stylized rather than naturalistic (Fig. 68: 1); hence the famous Ancient Cretan cult symbol (Fig. 68: 2), revered in other parts of the Mediterranean region as well, such as Malta and Spain [858, p. 84]. Horned altars similar to the Cretan were common in Ancient Israel. Hebrew priests, blessing the people, raised their hands with fingers forming a V sign; this presumably originated as a two-horned symbol. Horn-like protrusions like those that crowned altars began to be used for decorating buildings (Fig. 68: 3, 4). Knobs at the ends of these decorative horn-like protrusions (Fig. 68: 5) were derived from the caps fitted on the horn-tips (Fig. 67: 8) as a security measure during cult actions involving bulls.

⁹² The names Indra and Thor seem to be etymologically related: Indra may be seen as derived from **an-t.r.*, i.e., "heavenly bull."

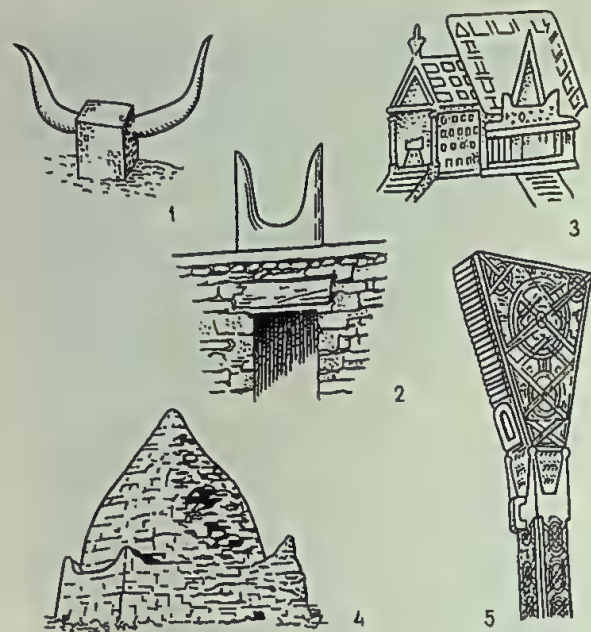


Fig. 68. Two-horned symbol and architectural decorative details deriving from it: 1 — Asia Minor, 6000 BC [762, p. 112]; 2 — Crete, ca 1500 BC; 3 — Phoenicia, 3rd c. BC [101a, p. 240]; 4 — Muslim tomb in Daghestan, Karchag, 19th c. [563, fig. 10]; 5 — 12th c. wooden pillar, Daghestan, Richa; [140, fig. 14].

As time passed, the bull-fight rites acquired the character of games. The ancient peoples of the Mediterranean region enjoyed sports involving a bull (as still popular in Spain, especially among the Basques). Bull-fighting was practised in Ancient Egypt, too, judging by preserved pictures [674, p. 334]. Contests between bulls and also between man and bull used to be held in Georgia [147, p. 97]; there is evidence that bull-fighting was known in Daghestan [187, p. 16]. The Basques and Georgians maintained the custom of bringing a bull to religious festivities; on some such occasions the bull was given wine to drink [147, p. 98], which conforms to the notion of the association between the earth god and intoxicating potions, characteristic of various pagan rites.

The ancient Greeks preserved, though in a modified form, certain deities of the country's former population. Dionysus or Bacchus was one of these.⁹³ The Minotaur showed vitality: Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus, became Dionysus' wife, but Dionysus is none other than the Hellenized Minotaur. Dionysus was in fact referred to as the bull [225, pp. 257, 258] and was portrayed with a bull's head; actors representing him wore hide and horns, and at festivals dedicated to the god men imitated bulls bellowing [696, pp. 227, 228].

Since the bull personified earth, the Greeks decorated bulls' skulls with flowers symbolizing earthly produce, and at festival observances in honor of Dionysus men and boys drank wine in order to identify themselves with the deity (hence the Christian ritual of communion). Dionysus or Bacchus was a lively god: he loved wine, women, flowers,

⁹³The founder of the archaic Corinthian royal dynasty (10th century B.C.) was named Bacchis; kings were in the habit of assuming names and other attributes of divinities.

and dancing. But human beings were sacrificed to him (later, animals replaced them).

According to Greek myth which recorded echoes of older religious concepts, Dionysus/Bacchus died in winter and returned to life in the spring. These myths reflect the notion of seasonal cycles.

The earth god was considered the patron not only of soil fertility, but of male virility as well; festive processions carried phallic representations. Heraclitus wrote that "Hades is identical with Dionysus." Hades was the underworld god; consequently, the divine bull was a manifestation of the earth and underworld god.

Indo-Europeans attributed certain features of the earth deity, who had been venerated by the early farming tribes they conquered, to their heavenly gods, but in some cases they remained in essence: an old Russian manuscript mentions a certain Tūr Satana (Ox the Devil) [40c, p. 750]. The Slavic Vēles, imaged as a man-bull, was identified with the Greek Pan in a ninth century Czech manuscript [40a, p. 132]. Pan was pictured as a man-goat. Still, one is perfectly justified in drawing a parallel between Veles and Pan, for Pan is one of the names of the earth god, the goat being one of this god's manifestations. One of Thor's epithets was "lord of goats." Bacchus was pictured not only as a bull, but also as a goat, and songs in his honor were called "goat songs."

The theme of a bull attacked by a lion is quite frequently found in ancient Oriental art. W. Hartner has established that in the fourth millennium B.C. the constellation Taurus disappeared below the horizon at the beginning of February at the geographic latitude of Sumer, whereas Leo stayed in the zenith [711]. This, in Hartner's opinion, suggested the corresponding mythological plot: the changes in the position of the constellations were interpreted as "the lion's victory over the bull." Determining of the moment when this took place was of practical significance: the annual cycle of agricultural work started in Sumer in the first half of February.

This may seem a reliable reconstruction of the semantics conveyed by the scene of a bull being attacked by a lion in ancient art. The question arises: how could the ancient people's conscience tolerate a victory over the revered deity, who, among other things, was an incarnation of masculinity, military valor, and finally, immortality?

Religion does not restrict itself to logic. According to myth, mighty and awesome gods like Phoenician Baal and Babylonian Marduk died and resurged. Various peoples performed ritual killing of creatures associated with the earth god, among them the snake and the bear, his typical representatives [558, pp. 555-575]. This custom was not restricted to agricultural communities; thus mythicization of the winter dying and springtime awakening of the earth could have taken place prior to the adoption of agricultural methods. It seems that the original myths about the death of the immortal god, as well as rituals of his killing, go back to the time when Neanderthal people killed the bear to seize its cave and flesh, and then hoped to appease it by offering it human sacrifices, and by leaving remains of its carcass in caves unsuitable for human habitation.

The motif of the fight between the bull and the lion raises yet another question: if the bull is the earth god,

who is the lion? Some evidence suggests that the earth, or underworld, deity was personified not only by the snake, goat, bull, and bear, but also by beasts of prey, including the lion. What can one make of this?

It follows from popular beliefs and ancient myths that various creatures represented the underworld in the Neolithic religion: 1) reptiles (principally the snake, and also the frog, tortoise, and crocodile); 2) herbivores (the deer, horse, bull, goat, and pig); 3) predators (the lion, leopard, wolf, bear, dog, and cat).⁹⁴ The plurality of these creatures, so dissimilar, is hardly compatible with the notion of a single deity. The underworld beings included, in addition to the lord, the deer/horse, as discussed in preceding chapters. In classical mythology, the dog only served the lord of the underworld, but was not the lord himself. As for ferocious creatures such as the serpent, bull, lion, wolf, and bear, the myths do not enable us to differentiate between them, to match each to a specific deity, because these creatures are constantly identified with one another, the characteristics of each being applied to others.

Monuments of ancient Hindu civilization include the scene of slaughtering a bull with a spear [96, p. 64]. But domestic animals, including bulls, were killed with a knife, not a spear. These scenes doubtless illustrate a myth, and the spear in this case must be regarded as an attribute of a deity, rather than simply a weapon. It will be shown later that the spear was associated with the underworld god.

The fight between the bull and the lion as images of the same deity might be regarded as due to distortions of the Neolithic early farming religion by the Sumerians. However, in Hartner's opinion, this theme first appeared in Lower Mesopotamia around 4000 B.C., in pre-Sumerian times. Different deities of the lower universe could exist, such as the earth god (the bull) and the underworld god (the lion, the serpent); but attempts to differentiate between them fail. Perhaps some of the oldest tribes represented the lower universe by one deity, others by another deity, so that their images ultimately merged. Finally, the killing of a bull by a lion in Mesopotamian mythology in the fourth to third millennia B.C. could be a variation on the theme of killing a deer by the underworld god. A single uniform religion cannot be supposed to have prevailed for the five thousand years (eighth to fourth millennia B.C.) of the early farming cultures on the territory extending from the Atlantic coast to India. Both the great length of time and the ethnic differences between the peoples speaking different languages and scattered over immense expanses make this impossible. There could be and most certainly were different denominations in the Neolithic religion which existed before the appearance of written language. This book uses the definition "Neolithic or early farming religion" conventionally; it is impossible to judge local variants of the related complex of beliefs. One such variant could be the religious conceptions expressed graphically in ornamentation on Elamite and Proto-Elamite pottery: its symbolism is often undecipherable even with a key that proved effective in other cases. It is not the "sects" in the early farming religion which provoke surprise. What is really remarkable is that this religion maintained the unity

⁹⁴See chapter "The Black God."

of its general conceptions. Judging by the data on Neolithic religious beliefs which lend themselves to reconstruction, these beliefs were strikingly uniform and stable.

It is quite possible that in Neolithic Lower Mesopotamia the bull and the lion, images of the Neolithic gods of earth and the underworld, were seen as two different deities. Perhaps they were considered closely related and were revered together. Rivalry in the divine sphere is nothing out of the ordinary, as is shown by myths; human sense took it as perfectly natural. Ancient traditions relate that gods could be at odds with one another, could engage in deadly combat, and that blood ties did not deter them: Cronus devoured his own children, Zeus dethroned his father, Osiris was ruined by his brother Seth. It may be concluded that although the bull was venerated as a divine incarnation of earth, mythological thinking found it possible that he might be slain by another representative of the nether regions. Incidentally, the bull's death was temporary: his constellation appeared over the horizon again in forty days, and people rejoiced at the god's resurrection.

In preceding chapters we cited objects and creatures treated as sacred for the reason that their shapes resembled the outlines of a cult symbol. An object could also be revered because it looked like another object considered sacred: the moon was deified because the crescent was associated with bull's horns (of course, in addition to this, it must have been venerated as a natural phenomenon serving as a means of reckoning time).

M. König cites examples which illustrate the ancient idea of a connection between the bull and the moon, an idea that arose as early as the Paleolithic [733, pp. 139-142]. He believes that moon veneration was primary in this case, as the moon embodied the notion of time, and the bull became an analogue of the moon due to association between the shape of the horns and the crescent. König also maintains that the numerous portrayals of bisons in Paleolithic art do not reflect hunting magic, but rather are symbols; in his opinion a bison with an arrow in its side symbolizes the "death" of the moon, i.e., moonless nights.

Whether this be so or not, much evidence points to the ancient association between the notions "moon" and "bull."

In ancient Iranian and Indian traditions the bull is an image of a moon deity [371a, p. 203]. In the Rig-Veda, the moon god Soma is often defined by the epithets "bull" and "he-man" [397b, p. 232]; since the moon represented the bull and the bull image had chthonic connotations, Soma was considered the judge of the dead. The bull was sacred to the Akkadian moon god Sin and the moon god Sami of the southern Arabs. The Avesta reads that the moon "contains in itself the semen of the bull" [778a, p. 127]. The Egyptian sacred bull Apis was referred to as "the moon's bull", begotten by a moonbeam [167, p. 50]. Sumerian texts refer to the moon as "the bearded bull," who "rules over time through the agency of his golden horns" [733, p. 141]. Texts of other ancient peoples show that the moon had significance as an underworld symbol [527, p. 95], a significance it retains in the practices of present-day Siberian shamans [371a, p. 234]. Some tribes performed ritual dances accompanied by kindling beacons to greet the new moon [818a, p. 126], expressing the notion of the

connection between the moon and the underworld. Popular conceptions among southern Slavs associate the moon with the world beyond the grave [247, p. 30]. The same notion existed during the period of Classical Antiquity concerning the moon goddess Selene [662, p. 68]. The Hittite mythopoetical motif about the moon fallen from the sky is a later variation of the myth about the underworld god cast down from the sky. This god was regarded as a source of sickness as well as of health, so that the Hittite words *arma* for 'moon' and *irman* for 'illness' are etymologically related [194, p. 130]. The moon god was the spouse of the heaven goddess who inflicted insanity, hence the superstitions shared by different peoples as to the connection between the moon and mental disorders. Words for the moon and for the color yellow are of the same root in the Hittite, Adygeian, and Kettian languages; this is because yellow is the color of gold, both gold and the moon being attributes of the same deity — the earth and underworld god. The Akkadian moon god Sin was considered the first progenitor of mankind, the source of evil and the incarnation of wisdom; among his emblems, in addition to the crescent and the bull, were the snake, lightning, and a boat; Saturday was dedicated to him; all these are typical features of the Neolithic earth god. Some mythologies considered the crescent a symbol of the sea [730b, p. 1410]; the ☾ was the sphere of the god of the nether universe. The name of the Etruscan deity Fufluns, believed to be a parallel to the Greek Dionysus, contains the appellation of the moon.

Abkhazians, when the new moon appeared on New Year's eve, went to the smithy to pray [337, p. 116]. This rite thus involved elements associated with the earth god in the early farming religion: the end of December (this will be discussed in greater detail), a smithy (for the underworld god was considered, in particular, a blacksmith), and the moon.

The name of the Chinese dragon, the horned and winged serpent, mythical lord of water springs, bestower of rain, and patron of fertility, was Lung. This word, which appears in the oldest Chinese inscriptions dating from the second half of the second millennium B.C., cannot be traced etymologically to any original Chinese word [453, p. 88]; it was apparently borrowed by the ancient Chinese together with the image of the serpent-bull-moon, the lord of the underworld. Even the Papuans identify the moon with the snake [671, p. 166]; this can be explained in terms of mythological conceptions of the Eastern Mediterranean Neolithic period: if the serpent and the bull are incarnations of the earth god, and the moon has the same connotations as the bull, then the moon is identified with the serpent.

An influential Soviet scholar, V. Propp, accounted for the similarities in myths, rites, and beliefs of dissimilar nations by a "natural connection between forms of labor and patterns of thinking" [440, p. 33]. One cannot but wonder which specific forms of labor might account for associating the snake with the moon among the people who inhabited Europe six thousand years ago (Figs. 124: 2; 381: 1), and among present-day inhabitants of New Guinea. It might be equally exciting to investigate how the mysterious psychological mechanism worked which "naturally" caused different peoples to identify the snake with the moon.

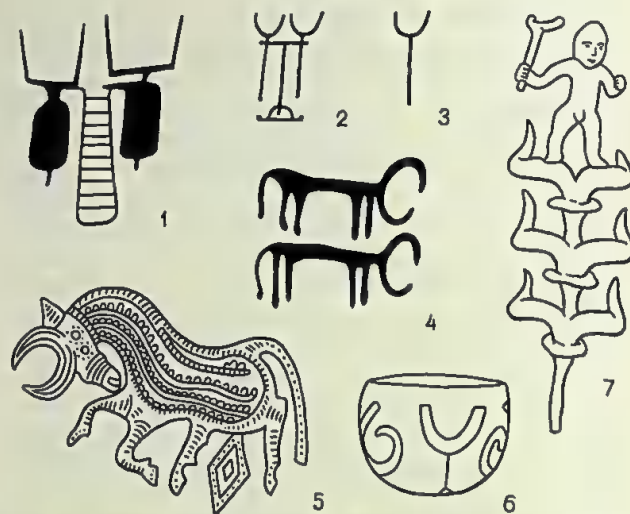


Fig. 69. Bull-moon: 1 — Italy, ca. 1800 BC [708, p. 449]; 2, 3 — Germany, ca. 2500 BC [719, p. 691]; 4 — Armenia, Bronze Age [340, p. 37]; 5 — Georgia, Bronze Age [179, p. 429]; 6 — England, Neolithic [719, p. 299]; 7 — Central Caucasus, ca. 1000 BC [537, p. 144].

At the other end of the world, in the snow-covered Arctic tundra, traces have been found of the same complex of ancient beliefs which originally took shape in the European Paleolithic and Western Asian Neolithic. An Eskimo shaman says: "We dread the spirit of the earth who calls forth stormy weather... We fear the moon god" [292, p. 9]. What objective factors could be responsible for the notion that the earth spirit calls forth stormy weather? What kind of logic would inspire fear of the moon? The formidable underworld god ascended to the sky in the image of a serpent and caused thunderstorms; the same god could assume the appearance of a bull, but the moon is the bull in heaven. The sources of superstitions are to be sought in irrational thinking, rather than in the objective conditions of human life. The worldwide similarity of the cult concepts of the religious complex being analyzed is due to the fact that myths, monstrous images, absurd and not infrequently cruel rites were disseminated from people to people and were regarded as items of useful knowledge.

That the images of the bull and the moon were related can also be seen from ancient symbolic designs. Bull horns are represented in some works of ancient art as a crescent moon (Figs. 69: 4, 5; 72: 5). In many cases the half-moon crescent terminated in knobs, like the tips of horns (Figs. 71: 1; 72: 1-3). The stylized portrayal of the bull (Fig. 69: 2) resembles an emblem in the form of a moon sign fixed on a staff (Fig. 69: 3, 6); an idol from the Kobán culture⁹⁵ standing on a bull's horns holds such an emblem in its hand (Fig. 69: 7). Also of interest is the similarity between a bull's altar in the shape of bull's horns and a crescent-shaped amulet (Fig. 70).

Crescent-shaped pendants were worn in Western Europe and the Northern Caucasus [537, Table 28]. The Russians crossed themselves when looking at the moon, the Germans bent their knees and bared their heads at the sight of the new moon [40a, p. 71]. Lithuanian songs call the moon

⁹⁵The Kobán culture flourished mainly on the territory of contemporary North Ossetia in about 1200–800 B.C.

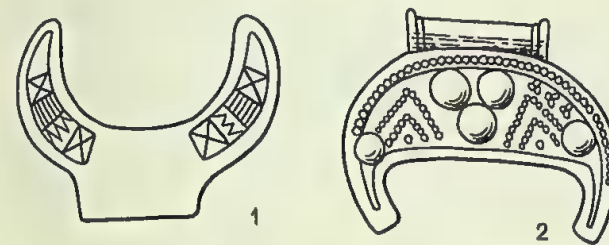


Fig. 70. Bull-moon in Western Europe, Bronze Age: 1 — Switzerland [659b, p. 473]; 2 — Sweden [771, p. 298].

"prince" or even "god" [693, p. 13]. But there is no moon deity in the Germanic, Slavic, or Lithuanian mythologies. Neither can one account for the veneration of the moon in this case by the idolization of natural phenomena in general, because this is alien to the religious beliefs of Indo-European nations. Neither did these nations practise an astral cult, i.e., worship of the stars and planets; of all the heavenly bodies, they venerated only the moon and the sun. Indo-European moon veneration seems to have been inherited from early farming religious conceptions. The same applies to moon veneration by non-Indo-Europeans. The Adygs, too, addressed prayers to the moon⁹⁶ [604, p. 34]. Observant Jews welcome the new moon with a special prayer; in ancient times this ritual used to be a festive one. Both in ancient Mesopotamian and American Indian mythologies the moon was considered more important than the sun [790, p. 81]. The Tasmanians celebrated the full moon by singing, dancing, and feasts. The Sumerian moon god was referred to as "the lord," "the prince of gods," "the father who holds in his hands the lives of all living creatures on earth."

The Sumerians regarded the moon god as the source of fertility. In Europe, as well as in other parts of the world, such as Brazil, China, and Melanesia, a belief exists that grass grows faster in the moonlight; French peasants preferred to sow in the moonlight [671, pp. 161, 162]. This odd view, which cannot be rationally explained, is based on the notion that the moon is the earth god, bestower of earthly fertility. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Hebrews, and Persians gave thanksgiving offerings of pastry to the moon. The moon was associated with fertility the world over and in different epochs. Is this a regular consequence of economic, natural, or other objective conditions? Or an expression of the common nature of human psychology? Or an infinite recurrence of random coincidences?

Not only did the earth god ensure the fertility of the soil; he was an incarnation of male reproductive power. This notion is behind popular beliefs that a woman can conceive from intercourse in the light of the full moon, and that a woman or a maiden can become pregnant by just looking at the moon [671, pp. 165, 223]. An Australian tribe calls a rite imitating coitus a "moon dance" [819, p. 126]. In the mythology of New Guinea, the moon is an image of a man irresistible to woman. Young Adygei girls tried to learn about their future husbands in the light of the moon. Slavs, Caucasians, and southern Arabs shared the belief that nymphs dance in the moonlight, an

⁹⁶The Adygs are a group of ethnic minorities in Northwestern Caucasus, including, among others, the Abkhazians and Adygeians.

echo of the archaic notion about the relationship between the mother goddess and the god represented by the moon.

V. Ivanov explains the connection between the Hittite *arma* ('moon') and *armahh* ('make pregnant') in terms of "physiological lunar cycles" [108, p. 685]; but this connection is due rather to association of the moon with the earth god, as well as to the reputation of the earth god as a source of evil, expressed in the affinity between the Hittite *arma* ('moon') and *armaniio* ('fall ill'). The menstrual cycle corresponds to the lunar cycle in duration, and this led to a conception in mythological thinking that the moon god causes periodic monthly indisposition in women; in the course of time, when beliefs modified and the former Great God turned into an evil spirit, a menstruating woman was seen as ritually unclean (stricken by an evil spirit).

Despite the fact that the sun represented the male deity in beliefs of the second and first millennia B.C. and the moon became associated with femininity, an opposite view was also maintained. In the Rig-Veda, Sūryah, the sun, is a bride and Soma, the moon, the bridegroom. Similarly, in the Edda the moon and the sun are respectively husband and wife. The Hebrew word for the moon is masculine, for the sun feminine (sometimes masculine). In Slavic songs, the Moon is a man, the Sun a woman. Some Slavic traditions refer to the moon as the bull and the sun as a cow [778, p. 40]. The Lithuanian *saule*, German *Sonne* ('sun') are feminine; the German *Mond*, Greek *men* ('moon') are masculine. In other Indo-European languages, however, the words for the sun are of masculine gender: the Latin *sol*, French *soléil*. Latin preserved two forms of the word for "moon": *luna* (f.) and *lunus* (m.). A Russian expression apparently records the archaic appellation for the moon in the masculine gender: a gray-haired man is characterized as white as the *lun* (m.), not the *luna* (f.).

In the Near and Middle East, where the Indo-European element was less significant than in Europe, if felt at all, local religious observances inherited the early farming image of the male moon deity: Tot and Khonsu in Egypt, Sin in Akkad, Soma in India, Nannar in Sumer, and a male deity of unknown name in Elam. The mythological conceptions of Caucasian mountain dwellers generally consider the moon as a male being and a patron of men.

It is customary to regard the Rig-Veda as a sort of bible of Indo-European mythology. But this is far from being correct: the autochthonous Dravidic characteristics of the Vedic gods are more numerous than those which can be qualified as Aryan. Soma, for example, is a heavenly manifestation of the pre-Aryan earth god. In particular, an intoxicating drink was dedicated to Soma, in line with the Greek notion that wine was a gift from Dionysus/Bacchus. Like wine during Dionysia, the soma drink was believed to give strength and to bring one closer to the deity.

The crescent is compared to a sickle by a Slavic tradition. In the Near East, however, the half-moon is commonly compared to a horn. This metaphor is quite archaic: it may come from the Paleolithic. Though the half-moon was depicted in many ancient images as two bull's horns, it was also often represented as one horn. M. König provides evidence that bull horns were associated in ancient times with two half-moons representing two lunar phases, waxing and waning [733, p. 141].



Fig. 71. Crescent and disk: 1 — Phoenicia, 800 BC [618g, pl. 54]; 2 — rock wall picture, Karelia, Neolithic [443, pl. 22]; 3 — Georgia, 6th c. [591, pl. 4]; 4, 5 — Sasanid crowns [622b, p. 83]; 6, 7 — Spain, Roman period [688, p. 119]; 8 — Daghestan, 1900 [139, p. 85]; 9 — Ancient Crete [867, p. 307]; 10 — Sumer, 2500 BC [737, plates]; 11, 12 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [693, p. 22]; 13 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [773, pl. 3].

The image of the fabulous unicorn probably arose in human fantasy because the moon in the sky suggested a horn. A Hebrew tradition refers to the unicorn as a "vicious beast," "vicious" being an epithet of the earth god; in Christian tradition the unicorn is associated with the Virgin Mary because the Great Goddess was the prototype of Christ's Mother; the Great Goddess' partner was the earth god pictured as a bull, either with paired or single horn. It is noteworthy that a fabulous creature with one horn is encountered in Paleolithic works of art (Fig. 383: 4). Possibly, since the moon was pictured as "a single horn," it became a symbol of the number 1, so that Monday, the first day of the week in many traditions, was dedicated to the moon god.

The symbol of a combined disk and crescent occurs abundantly among ancient monuments of Europe, Western Asia and the Caucasus (Fig. 71). In the light of mythological conceptions which have reached us in the form of written documents and popular traditions, this can be interpreted as expressing the union of the "heavenly couple" — the sun and the moon. But this could not have been the initial (Neolithic) semantics of the symbol. The underworld god possessed the woman-sun in his underground kingdom; but in the sky, where he appeared as the moon, the Great Goddess, his spouse and the mother of the sun maiden, dominated, and she would never have tolerated such a liaison.

The disk was an emblem of the heaven goddess, and the crescent of the earth god. A combination of these two signs must have expressed the connection between femininity and masculinity in nature, embodied in the images of the Great Goddess and the Great God. In the Bronze era, the disk came to be perceived as a solar symbol, as was the cross. Hence, presumably, the combination of the

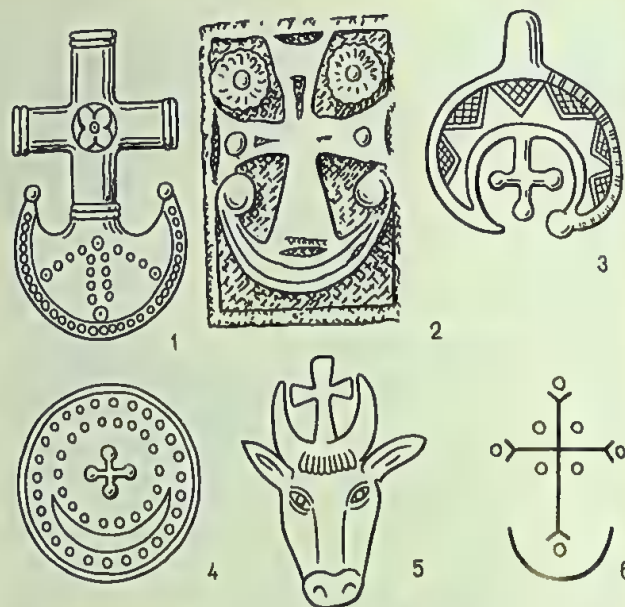


Fig. 72. Crescent and cross: 1 — Yugoslavia, ca 800 BC [719, p. 24]; 2 — Georgia, 6th c. [591, pl. 39]; 3 — Russia, 12th c. [137, p. 61]; 4 — Ancient Crete [676a, p. 514]; 5 — relief on a church wall, 5th c., Georgia; 6 — design on a 7th century church wall, Iraq [622a, p. 56].

cross and half-moon (Fig. 72).

This might be sufficient analysis of the semantics of the crescent and disk or cross designs, were it not for the following circumstance. The combination of cross and crescent was used in Cretan monuments of the Minoan culture (Fig. 72: 4), and the ancient Cretan religion belongs in the sphere of early farming cult concepts. It is true, of course, that in the Bronze Age, to which this example refers, new trends could have reached Crete from the continent, where earlier religious concepts of the Neolithic period had been ousted by new cult observances. Or, at least, new meanings of old graphemes could have found their way to Crete from the continent. This, however, is unlikely, in view of the firmly established originality of the ancient Cretan culture.

In all probability, in this case as well the combination of the cross and crescent should be analyzed in terms of early farming religious beliefs. Then the cross must be a symbol of the earth god. The half-moon could play the role of an arc which designated clouds and would thus be a goddess' symbol. This interpretation is in some cases confirmed by evidence. For example, a semioval can look like the sign of a cloud with seed (cf. Fig. 13: 2). The semioval in Figure 72: 3 looks like a reduced oval, a heaven symbol, with cloud signs along the circumference (cf. Fig. 36: 3). Nevertheless, in Figure 72: 1, 3, the arc has knobs at the ends; this means that the arc was after all semantically connected not, or not only, with the cloud, but also with the moon.

An opinion exists that the combined cross and crescent is a schematic representation of an anchor [403, p. 21]. The anchor was, indeed, an object of veneration in ancient times, and images of it were sometimes made up of the cross and half-moon. But this combination emerged at least two thousand years before anchors of this shape

were made. Apparently, the anchor began to be venerated because it resembled the sacred symbol.

The Cretan design representing a bull's head with a double-edged hatchet, *labris*, between the horns (Fig. 73: 1), has the same meaning, for the double axe was an emblem of the goddess [696, p. 187]. The goddess herself is depicted within the outlines of the bull's head on a cult object from Tripolye (Fig. 73: 2).

Bronze Apis statuettes are known which carry a disk on the bull's head (Fig. 73: 3). Egyptologists do not hesitate to refer to this disk as "solar," although roundness alone is not sufficient basis for reaching such a conclusion, and besides, the fact that the bull and the sun are alongside

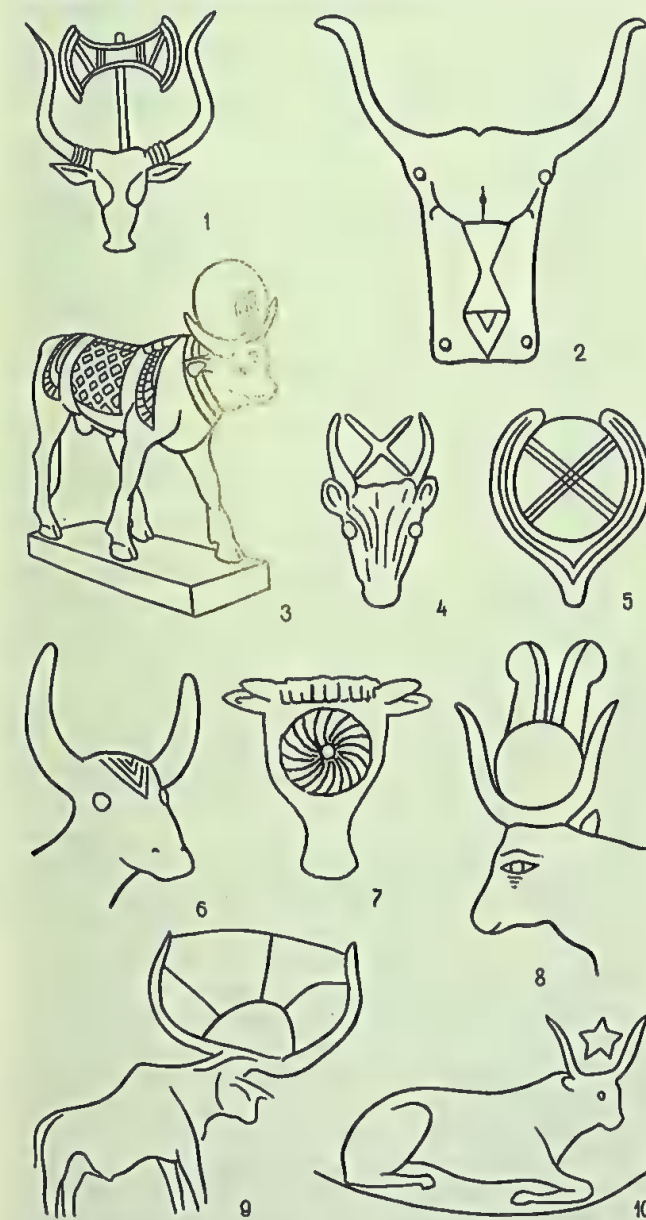


Fig. 73. Bull with heaven goddess symbol: 1 — Ancient Crete [676c, p. 619]; 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [696, p. 188]; 3 — Ancient Egypt [639, p. 74]; 4 — Ancient Crete [676c, p. 619]; 5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [468b, p. 25]; 6 — Central Europe, Bronze Age [681, p. 100]; 7 — Southeastern Europe, ca 1000 BC [800a, pl. 3]; 8 — Ancient Egypt [347, p. 17]; 9 — rock wall picture, Northern Africa [627, pl. 51]; 10 — Ancient Egypt [767, p. 270].

one another is not accounted for in any way. If, on the other hand, the disk is here a heaven symbol, the design can be a survival of an early farmers' cult formula.

The oblique cross has been shown by M. Gimbutas [696, p. 116] to have been a symbol of the goddess. That is why this sign appears together with the bull head (Fig. 73: 4, 5).

The bull's head is sometimes depicted with a triangle on the forehead (Fig. 73: 6). L. Franz, in an article on the subject, holds that the triangle here is a stylized rendering of the hairline on the forehead of a bull [681, p. 104]. As is often the case, a straightforward rationalistic interpretation of an ancient symbol leads to an erroneous conclusion. The triangle is a sign of woman, derived from the shape of the female pubes. The triangle was also a symbol of the goddess since it was a cloud sign. Generally speaking, a conventional sign in the form of a triangle, being an elementary geometrical figure, appeared under different circumstances and could have different semantics,⁹⁷ but here we are dealing with the heaven goddess' symbol; in particular, Apis was represented by a bull with a white triangle on the forehead, white being a color symbol of the goddess.

There are ancient representations of the bull head with a vortical rosette (Fig. 73: 7), in this case also a symbol of the goddess.

Figure 73: 8 shows between the horns of a cow (rather than a bull, which is not at all surprising, since the notions of the Neolithic religion were already confused in Ancient Egypt) a sign in the form of a disk with two extensions; this is yet another heaven symbol (Fig. 258).

In Figure 73: 9, it is not the sun between the bull horns as is stated in the legend to this illustration in F. Behn's publication, but a rain cloud (Fig. 10: 1, 3, 6).

The sequence of samples analyzed includes a representation of the bull with a five-pointed star (Fig. 73: 10); this sign, too, was a symbol of the Great Goddess.⁹⁸

In Georgia, as well as in Ancient Egypt, the bull with a white spot on the forehead was venerated; the Georgian name for this white mark is etymologically related to the word for the sky [335a, pp. 490, 491]. The Ingushes and Ossets used to fasten a piece of white cloth to the horns of a sacrificial bull [12, p. 366]; cloth, especially white, was a symbol of the goddess.⁹⁹

Thus, a combination of the bull head with a certain symbol expressed the relationship between masculinity and femininity in nature, this concept being typical of Neolithic religious beliefs.

Some linguistic evidence also indicates that the bull was a cult image in ancient times, and a significant one.

The Scandinavian thundergod's name Thor means "bull," and he, as pointed out above, was portrayed with bull horns. One might think that this attribute of the pre-Indo-European earth god was transposed onto the Indo-European thundergod because both of them personified masculinity. But this is not the point. The Indo-European

⁹⁷ See chapter "Polysemantic Triangle."

⁹⁸ See chapter "Stars."

⁹⁹ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

thundergod, as will be shown, is in origin the Neolithic earth god.¹⁰⁰ And the name Thor, as well as the appellation for thunder, his attribute, *donner*, *torann* is non-Indo-European in origin.

The Slavic *tur*, Greek *tauros*, and Latin *taurus* ('bull') have equivalents in non-Indo-European languages, such as the Turkish *tur* for 'calf' and ancient Assyrian *townra* for 'bull.' Besides, the deity's name Thor is not confined to Indo-European mythology alone. Taara, Toore, or Tuuri in the mythologies of Estonians, Finns, and Karelians is the god of heaven and thunder. In the mythology of the Ugrian population in the region of the Ob River (Siberia), Tórum is a heaven god, the creator of the world and the lord of life (some attributes of the Neolithic heaven goddess were transferred onto him: the color white and the birch tree). Some Siberian peoples venerated Tórem, a heaven deity dwelling in the vicinity of the North Star (which was associated with the earth god in the earliest beliefs¹⁰¹); arrows, an attribute of the earth god,¹⁰² were sacrificed to him [730b, p. 1589]. Toturut was a heaven god among some African tribes. Tir was an evil spirit among some Near Eastern nations [730b, p. 1576]. Tireh was a moon talisman among the ancient Hebrews. Iš-Taran was one of Mesopotamia's oldest gods; his functions were those of a judge and a healer, which were also the functions of the Neolithic earth god; he was associated with a snake. Dor-Le is a demon in Buddhism [730a, p. 464]. Tori is an ancient Japanese word for 'bird' (some mythologies pictured the thundergod as a fiery bird); the word may also mean "celestial bird-boat" in Japan.

The Babylonian deity Tharthak, the Akkadian Turtak, possessed a wide range of the characteristics of the earth and underworld god of the early farming period: he was regarded as a demon of the underworld, a source of evil, and a patron of lewd women (this recalls a medieval European belief that lewd women have intercourse with the devil); sacred donkeys were dedicated to him; he was associated with the planet Mars (i.e., was considered a deity of war and agriculture) [411, p. 369].

Tarhunt was venerated in ancient Asia Minor; Hittite inscriptions refer to him as "the weather god of heaven" [198, p. 123]. He was preceded by the Hattian (i.e., non-Indo-European) god Tarhu. A Cretan inscription in an undeciphered non-Indo-European language contains the word *tarkomn*. A medieval Georgian chronicle mentions Targamos, a mythical progenitor of the Caucasian peoples (mythical progenitors often have characteristics associating them with the image of the Neolithic underworld god). The name of the Celtic god Taranis sounds very much like Targamos. A Scythian god was called Tarhitaos (Tarhi theos?). A Slavic epic mentions a folklore hero Tarh who dwells on a high mountain [475, pp. 584-591] (the mountain being an attribute of the earth god); in Armenian tradition Torh is the demon of earthquake and volcanoes, pictured as a blacksmith.

Armenian Tyr is a patron of wisdom, writing, and the

arts. But there is a curse in Armenia: "May the scribe get you," which corresponds to the English "Go to hell," "The scribe" is an epithet for Tyr, who was believed to be a guide of souls in the nether realm. This personage obviously derives from the underworld god.

The ancient Persian *tir* meant 'arrow' [610, pp. 25-28], an attribute of the Neolithic god of earth and the underworld. In French *tir* means 'shooting, firing.' In the Sumerian language, *tir* is both 'arrow' and 'life'; the latter meaning of the word is due to the arrow's phallic associations. The names of the Great Goddess and her partner, the earth god, often sounded similar; thus the name of the Etruscan heaven goddess was Turan.¹⁰³

The toponym Targhim, resembling the name of the Caucasian progenitor Targamos, is encountered in different places in Western Asia, as far away as Arabia. This toponym is also known in the Northern Caucasus (the name of a village in Ingushetia). There was a settlement called Targu in medieval Daghestan.

The Taurian people populated the Crimea in ancient times; they venerated a goddess considered by the Greeks to be an analogue of Artemis (the latter is related to the Neolithic heaven goddess¹⁰⁴) and offered human sacrifices to her. The heaven goddess was regarded as the wife of the earth god, one of whose names was **t.r.* It is but logical to assume that the Taurians worshiped a god of the same name, hence their ethnonym.

The he-goat was associated with the image of the underworld god (hence the well-known image of the devil as a he-goat); one can discern in the Greek *tragos* ('he-goat') the stem *t.r.* and the suffix *-g/-k*. The ethnonym *thr.k* of the Thracians seems to fall into the same category.

The ethnonym of the Turki may also be traced to the names Tarh, Thor, Tür. This ethnonym is considered as a two-element formation: *tür-k*. The meanings of the stem *tür/tor* in Turkic languages are "power, strength," "law," "rule," "a notable," "an honorary place by the fire" [249, p. 45], these notions being semantically associated with the image of the earth god. As for the affix *-k*, which in A. Kononov's opinion designates kinship [249, p. 44], we will analyze it later.

The root *t.r.* can be traced in a series of words with dissimilar meanings, the common origin of which is corroborated by their semantic relationship with the earth god image. For example, the Urartuan *tarai* ('powerful'; retained in the Georgian expression *tari Alale*), the Greek *tyrannos* ('ruler'), the Italian *taranto* ('battering-ram'), the Latin *torvus* ('ferocious'), *torus* ('height'), *torrens* ('torrent'), *terror* ('fear, terror'), *terrā* ('earth'). This sequence may include the German *Tier* ('beast') and Dutch *teer* ('resin, tar'; the underworld god was often pictured as a beast, and black color was his attribute).

The names of some Abkhazian pagan gods, patrons of cattle-breeding and of the home, end in *-tar/-tyr* which does not derive etymologically from the Abkhazian language. The Chuvashian *tore*, *ture* for 'god' also belongs here.

¹⁰³The names of the Egyptian Hathor and the Mesopotamian Ishtar are different in origin. Hat-Hor means 'the house of Horus.' The etymology of the name Ishtar is not clear.

¹⁰⁴See chapter "The Great Goddess."

In some Indo-European languages, the words for 'bull' have the sound *s* before *t.r.*: the Avestan *staōra*, Gothic *stiur*, German *Stier*. The prefix *s-* in combination with another appellation for the bull, *b.k*, produces the word for 'dog' in Slavic languages. The Turkic for 'dog' is *köbäk* in which the prefix *k-* appears in combination with *b.k*. Apparently, the prefixes *s-* and *k-* in this case express belonging, like the Georgian *sa-* and Latin *co-*. Similarly, the prefix *k-* in the words *kobyła* ('mare'), *caballo* and *Kybele* (Cybele) may be seen as an indication of belonging in combination with the root-word *b.l* which is a name of the earth god (and also a designation for the bull in some languages).

Not only do words for 'bull' have the stem *s.t.r.*, but also other terms and names pertaining to the underworld god.

Old Russian sources contain vague references to a deity called Stribog. The only thing known about him is that he is related to the winds: the medieval Russian epic *The Lay of Igor's Host* calls the winds grandchildren of Stribog; a Ukrainian fairy tale refers to him as the father of winds [200, p. 15]. But the underworld god producing thunderstorms was the prototype of the later specialized gods of thunderstorm, tempest, and winds. Various etymologies have been proposed for the name Stribog, all of them dubious [543c, p. 777]. Yet proceeding from information about Stribog and from the meaning of the stem *s.t.r.* ('bull'), one can assume that the word *Stribog* means 'bull-god.' There is a phrase in *The Lay of Igor's Host*: "Winds; Stribog's grandsons, rise from the sea as arrows." It seems obvious that the words *strela* ('arrow') and *Stribog* are etymologically related. This applies not only to the words, but also to the symbolic notions they designate, since the spear and the arrow were attributes of the underworld god. Also noteworthy is the statement that the winds/arrows rise "from the sea": the god of earth and underworld was also the sea god.

Slavic Stribog and Roman Saturn resemble each other not only in name (the common root *s.t.r.*); their characteristics point to the same image of the Neolithic earth god. The Romans held Saturn in high esteem. Modern mythologists consider him the god of agriculture; but the Saturnalia, the feast dedicated to Saturn in Ancient Rome, was celebrated in the second half of December, the month not associated with agriculture. The state treasury was kept in Saturn's temple, obviously because the earth god was a guardian and a patron of wealth. A pig was sacrificed to him.¹⁰⁵ Associated with him were popular conceptions of the golden age when people lived in everlasting peace, and there was no slavery or social inequality (these legends apparently recorded times before the invasion by Indo-European tribes). Slaves were granted temporary freedom during the Saturnalia, perhaps to commemorate Saturn's reign when there was no slavery. The name *Saturn* is etymologically connected with the Latin *saturum* ('satiated, surfeit, rich, abundant'). The Romans considered Saturn the god of time (which corresponds to a function of the earth god); Roman authors believed that "he became Saturn because he is satiated with years." Of course, this is naive etymology; *saturum* derives from the name of the deity and not vice versa.

¹⁰⁵The pig was an animal dedicated to the earth god; see chapter "The Black God."

The Etruscan *Satre* was the predecessor of the Roman Saturn. The name of the Scandinavian god of fire Surtr [730b, p. 1511] is similar to that of Saturn both morphologically and semantically. The planet Saturn was considered evil in ancient astrology and was designated as black.

It is not by accident that the Greek sylvan demigods *satyrs* bear a name resembling the Roman *Saturn*. Typical satyr traits are hostility to people, certain characteristics of a goat or a horse, boisterousness, lechery, excessive drinking, and fondness for revelry — all these being grotesque features of the Neolithic earth god. Not always was Satyr a comic figure the way he was seen by the Greeks: the proper name *Satür* is encountered in the list of Cretan kings [380, p. 108], among the names of Bosporan kings, and even Christian martyrs.

Various languages have words that may be referred to the category of names analyzed here, not only in terms of form, but also in view of their semantic connection with the image of the Neolithic earth god. These include the Russian *stary* ('old'), *stremitelny* ('swift, impetuous'), *strah* ('fear'), *strast* ('passion'; the Czech *strast* means 'grief, sorrow'), *stradat* ('suffer'), *stroit* ('build'), *sterviatnik* ('carrion-crow'), *strizovy* (dialect: 'bright-red'); the Sanskrit *sthirás* ('firm, strong'), Old Icelandic *storr* ('big, strong, manly'); Greek *strenos* ('strength'), English *storm*, *stream*, *stern*, German *sterben* ('die'), Czech *strumen* ('water spring'), Lithuanian *strujus* ('old man').

The Satan is the former underworld god of the early farming period, dethroned by his brother Michael for his sins and arrogance. In the course of time, the Hebrews came to look upon Satan as the adversary of Yahweh; initially he was one of God's adherents, a deity rather than the despicable devil he later became. The Hebrew *Satanel* means "Satan god," and the Gospels refer to him as "the prince of this world." There are still tiny religious sects who worship Satan (Satanists and Esedians); they believe that Satan is not an incarnation of evil, but rather a deposed god who, when the time comes, will regain his former position and will restore the kingdom of good and justice. The name Satan is related to the Arabic appellation for the devil — *shaitan*. Various Caucasian settlements were probably named after him: Shatili in Khevsuretia, Shaitl in Daghestan, and Shatoi in Chechenia. This assumption will not appear far-fetched if one keeps in mind that the Lak people (Daghestan) call the constellation Pleiades, which they considered divine, *Sito*, while in the far north the Lapps have a word *seite*, meaning divinity.

The word *Satan* differs from the above names and terms involving the root *s.t.r.* in that it has lost the terminal *-r*. Other examples of such a transformation are the names of the mythical serpent Sata and the demon Seth who was identified with Sata in Egyptian mythology [766b, p. 70]. *Seth* is a polite way of addressing a man in India. This group of words probably also includes the name of the star Sothis (Sirius) which, judging by the range of its characteristics, was associated with the god of the lower universe (the Egyptians, in particular, referred to it as the Dog Star, the dog being an animal mythologically related to this deity). Sedu in Assyro-Babylonia was the underworld spirit pictured as a winged bull (the underworld

¹⁰⁰See chapter "The White God."

¹⁰¹See chapter "The Four Directions."

¹⁰²See chapter "The Black God."

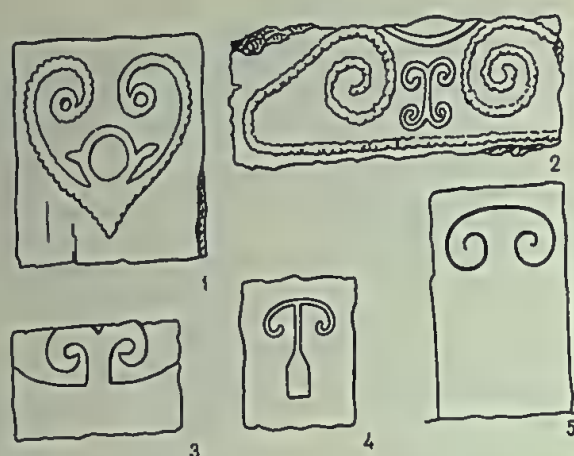


Fig. 74. Ram symbols on carved stones, Daghestan: 1 — Kalakoreish; 2 — Dibgashi; 3, 4 — Mugri; 5 — medieval tombstone near Vikri.



Fig. 75. Ram symbol as architectural detail, Daghestan: 1 — carved wooden pillar in a mosque, Tama; 2 — tomb stela, Urga; 3 — carved wooden pillar in a house, Kanasiraghi.

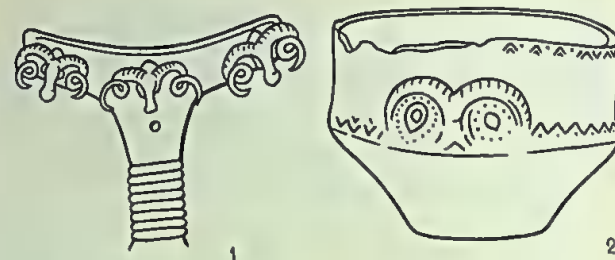


Fig. 76. Representation of ram head on ancient artifacts: 1 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646b, pl. 6]; 2 — Scandinavia, Bronze Age [719, p. 208].

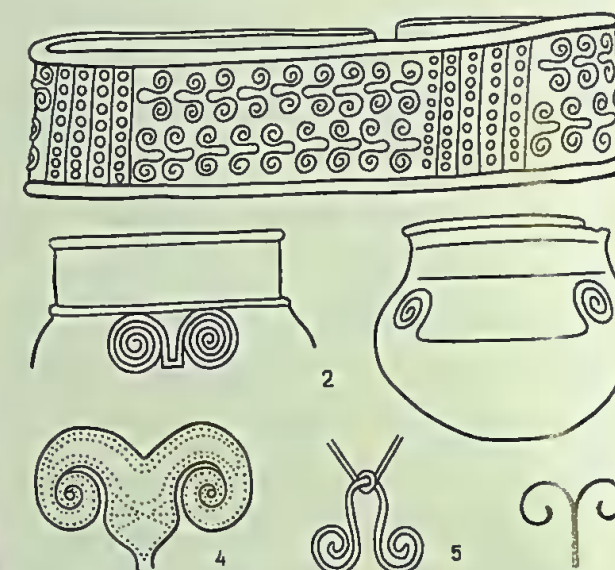


Fig. 77. Bispiral symbol in decorative art: 1 — Troy [824, p. 551]; 2, 3 — Southern Caucasus, 3000—1000 BC [278, p. 100; 334, pl. 7]; 4 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 49]; 5 — Baltic region, Middle Ages [33f, p. 378]; 6 — sign on a 19th century mosque wall, Daghestan, Kurag.

A lyre-shaped figure with two spirals, a simplified, schematic representation of a ram head, adorns Southern Caucasian Bronze Age pottery (Fig. 77: 2, 3). This figure was a favorite decorative motif among Bronze Age peoples of Western Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Caucasus. Enjoying very wide dissemination, it reached the Baltic region [33f, p. 379] and even Equatorial Africa [216c, p. 34].¹⁰⁹

The bispiral symbol was a quite popular decorative element (Figs. 77: 1; 78: 6); it crowned the bronze pins which were in common use from the Eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia and from Iran to the Northern Caucasus. This decorative design does not owe its existence to the fact that many articles — pins, buckles, and pendants — were made from wire, the ends of which could be easily curved (Fig. 77: 1); the spiral was known long before the

On the whole, the symbols analyzed in this book are rather rarely found in Equatorial and Southern Africa. The reference here is to Nigeria, where, especially on the territory of the medieval state of Benin, elements of the decorative or symbolic graphic motifs belonging to ancient European and Western Asian cultures are more common than in other parts of the continent populated by Black peoples.



Fig. 78. Bivolute symbol: 1 — signs on tower walls in Ingushetia [266, p. 191]; 2 — Catacomb culture (Ukraine and Southern Russia), ca 2000 BC [117, p. 3]; 3 — Hittite heaven hieroglyph; 4, 5 — Hittite reliefs, ca 1500 BC [631, pls. 159, 40]; 6 — Ancient Khorezm, 3rd c. [101a, p. 363].

invention of the wire; besides, the bivolute tops of the pins were carried out not only as two spiral wire scrolls, but in other techniques as well (Fig. 77: 4); finally, such a figure could be engraved in metal and stone (Fig. 77: 6). The bivolute shape was worn as a pendant around the neck [673b, Table 360], (Fig. 77: 5), suggesting that it was an honored emblem rather than merely an adornment.

Two types of bivolute figures exist: lyre-shaped, i.e. more or less schematic ram-head representations (Fig. 77), and resembling an Ionic capital (Fig. 78). The latter seems to have been of somewhat different ancestry. It was a Hittite hieroglyph designating the sky (Fig. 78: 3), apparently originally connected with the Egyptian hieroglyph designating heaven (Fig. 7: 1), which looked like an imaginary celestial canopy on props.¹¹⁰ Such an angular sign could

Yet another origin of this sky sign may be suggested: it may come from the grapheme in the form of a bracket (Fig. 19: 2-5), which is an angular tracing of an arch (Fig. 19: 6) — an abbreviated variety of the cloud sign (Fig. 19: 1), symbol of the heaven goddess.

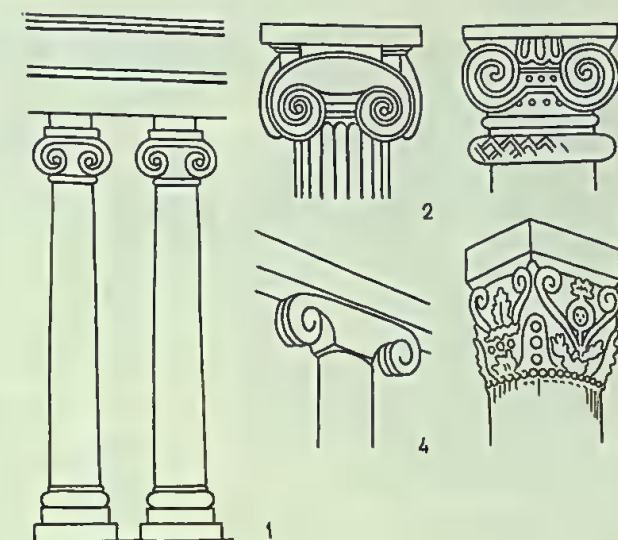


Fig. 79. Bivolute symbol as a pillar capital: 1 — Iran, ca 700 BC [716, p. 207]; 2 — Ancient Greece, 430 BC [101, p. 339]; 3 — South Georgia, ca 800 [21, pl. 49]; 4 — Turkmenian vernacular architecture [294, p. 56]; 5 — Bulgaria, vernacular architecture.

have been transformed into a smooth line whose curved ends became two volutes through association with the ram sign. This grapheme, resembling the ram sign, was later perceived as one, the more so since some designs which display it on a support (Figs. 74: 4; 78: 1) look like a schematic representation of a ram head.

The ram sign may occasionally be seen on top of a pillar (Fig. 79: 3, 5); this, however, must result from a reinterpretation of the emblem composed of a pillar crowned with a sky symbol (Fig. 79: 1, 2, 4). The pillar was an attribute of the goddess' cult; it symbolized the World Tree with its top reaching into the sky, so that it was logical to set the heaven symbol on top of the pillar (Fig. 78: 4, 5). We may seek support for the assumption that the bivolute capital was initially a symbol of the sky in the Greek appellation for the pillar capital *kalathosis*, which appears to incorporate the name Kali. The original meaning of this emblem as a heaven symbol was apparently forgotten as time elapsed. The figure came to be perceived as a ram symbol, and the ram sign was placed on top of a pillar.

The emblem of the Great Goddess was much revered. When its original meaning became obscure and it began to be perceived as a ram sign, an appropriate degree of veneration was transposed to the ram sign and to the ram image proper. The god-ram and the ram symbol embodied a specific religious idea, but the significance attached to the symbol and to the image of the ram exceeded the scope of significance of that concept. For instance, kings crowned themselves with ram horns despite the fact that the divine ram's position in the pantheon was far from supreme.

A bivolute symbol resembling an Ionic capital is encountered among artifacts of medieval Daghestan (Fig. 74: 5), Checheno-Ingushetia (Fig. 78: 1), and North Ossetia. The sign was not an imitation of an architectural detail, the Ionic capital, having been known four thousand years ago to tribes inhabiting Southern Russia and Northern Caucasus plains (Fig. 78: 2), long before the Ionic capital



Fig. 80. Gods and kings with ram horns: 1 — carved stone in Daghestan, Amuzghi; 2 — Troy, 2500 BC [631, pl. 10]; 3 — representation of Sassanid king [716, p. 332]; 4 — coin with head of Alexander the Great [245, p. 4].

appeared and even before Greece came into existence.

The bivolute symbol was placed at the top of free-standing pillars as early as the Bronze Age (Fig. 78: 4, 5). It also appeared on pillars of structures, whence the capital with two volutes emerged, preceding the Ionic capital.

Nineteenth century architectural historians thought that the volutes of proto-Ionic capitals derived from the decorative treatment of bolster capitals of wooden constructions (Fig. 79: 4). However, one can see bivolute capitals on pillars lacking bolsters (Fig. 79: 1, 2). In some cases the bivolute figure crowning the pillar looks like a superposed detail (Fig. 79: 2, 3, 5); it is likely that in ancient times this type of cult emblem was fixed onto pillars that were already there. It may be of interest to compare Figures 74: 1 and 79: 5; this is the same emblem, on a wall in one case and on a pillar in the other. Thus, the bispiral sign does not derive from the form of a capital, but vice versa, the Ionic capital used the shape of the sacred symbol that crowned the pillar.

The Ionic capital is only a specific application of the bispiral motif. Bispiral figures are found decorating various objects (vessels, clothing, walls, burial monuments), of all sort of materials (bronze, ceramics, stone, wood, embroidery), over thousands of years up through the nineteenth century. This universality of application, resistance to change, and wide dispersion indicate that the figures were not abstract ornamental motifs, but rather meaningful ideographs treated as revered symbols.

Thus the emblem of the heaven goddess was revered is understandable; but why the unusual popularity of the ram sign? The art critic K. Berladina writes: "It was not merely an embellishment, but a symbol of prosperity, of wealth associated with cattle breeding, which the ancient Kobanian must have seen in these ram head images, wearing them as amulets and furnishing burial sites with them" [574, p. 11]. Quite true, sheep and goats were essential to the prosperity of Caucasian mountain dwellers. But had this been the only reason, the ram sign would hardly have become so highly revered. Ancient farmers did not worship the vital ear of grain; nor did the inhabitants of Arctic regions worship the seals, walrus, or fish which were their staple food. The ancient Jewish economy was partly based on sheep-breeding, but the Jews never worshiped the ram-god and never used the bivolute symbol; the Papuans, on the other hand, wear the sacred ram horn emblem on their

chest, though there were no sheep in New Guinea.

The ram image was not venerated in the Caucasus as a symbol of plenty. The Ingushes, for instance, vowed: "I swear by the grave of my forefathers," or "I swear by the ram" [266, p. 128]. One of the Chechens' highest commendations is: "He is like a ram," i.e., a worthy man, a fine fellow [567, p. 187].

In the Dargavs Ravine of North Ossetia, there stood a carved stone image of the "sacred ram," considered the patron of child-bearing; Ossetian women brought clay ram figurines to the sanctuary, supplicating the "sacred ram" to bestow children on them [363, p. 252]. (This corroborates the assumption that owing to the similarity of his symbol to one of the goddess' symbols, the "sacred ram" replaced her to a certain extent and assumed her functions, for it was the goddess who should have been addressed in matters involving childbirth). The Ingushian for sheep is *twa*; the name of a mountainous Caucasian tribe — the Dwals — may derive from this word. If so, it is not because the mountain dwellers tended sheep, but because they worshiped the sacred ram. A Sumerian word for "ram" was *udu*, while *idi* is the Basque for "bull"; this is an example of how different animals got etymologically related names based on their mythological semantic connection.

The Armenian *hoyak* for a pillar capital derives from *hoy*, meaning spiral, volute, and ram horn. It is not improbable that the word *hoyak* originally meant an emblem commonly set on top of a pillar.¹¹¹

A human head with ram horns is carved on a wall in the Daghestanian village of Amuzghi (Fig. 80: 1); a similar motif was impressed in Troy five thousand years ago (Fig. 80: 2). This is representation of a deity, rather than art for art's sake. Coins were minted in Classical Antiquity, portraying a male head with ram horns [814, p. 80]; as is well known, images on coins were usually of royal persons or divinities.

Alexander the Great wore ram horns on special occasions (Fig. 80: 4); the kings of Ancient Iran wore a crown with ram horns (Fig. 80: 3). This symbolism must have been a necessary exhibition of divine origin; despots demanded that their subjects idolize them. However, materials pertaining to the period of documented history do not contain any information on the nature of the particular deity personified by the ram. It is likely that by the second millennium B.C. the meaning of the image was already largely forgotten.

¹¹¹ The etymology of the word *hoy*, associated with the name of a deity, will be discussed later.



Fig. 81. Incised stones in Daghestanian villages of Khindakh, Somoda, and Machada.

Egyptian Ammon was portrayed with a ram head. Another god in the image of a ram — Khnum — was also venerated in Egypt. It is impossible to discover the initial character of these deities from Egyptian evidence alone. Ra was identified with Ammon to support his prestige, which further complicated the issue. The Greeks, who regarded Ammon-Ra as the god of heavenly light, identified him with their heaven god Zeus. Zeus was also sometimes depicted with ram horns.

What if all this is not merely confusion? Suppose the ram image did have something to do with heaven. Figure 80: 3 shows ram horns in combination with a disk or a sphere. In Figures 74: 1 and 79: 5 the horns are combined with a ring; what is the meaning of this ring, disk, and sphere? Grave stelae in Daghestan are sometimes crowned with a disk or sphere; however, some bear ram horns (Fig. 75: 2). Assuming that the disk or sphere here designated the sun, were the ram horns solar symbols?

Some carved Daghestanian stones (Fig. 81) present a relationship between the ram sign (a pair of spirals) and a solar sign (swastiko-spiral).¹¹² Designs found outside Daghestan also point to a mythological relationship between the ram and the sun. As shown above, the horse was considered an incarnation of a solar deity, and therefore the association between the ram and the sun could be expressed in a combination of ram horns and the horse (Fig. 82: 1). The ram sign on a boat (Fig. 82: 2) may then be regarded as a solar symbol, which becomes clear if one compares this Bronze Age design with numerous Scandinavian rock wall paintings of the same period that depict a boat transporting the sun (Fig. 172). Perhaps, the combination Ammon-Ra was not simply the result of Egyptian priestly speculations, but was based on the ram's solar connections?

Thus evidence exists pointing to a certain association between the ram and the sun in ancient cult conceptions.

¹¹² See chapter *The Swastika* for swastiko-spirals.

But what lies behind this? After all, the sun, warming the earth, benefited not only the flocks of sheep, and people's prosperity was not based only or even mainly on the ownership of rams. Besides, the notion that the ram was sacred was shared by cultivators of the soil as well as by cattle breeders.

A design from Tuva (north of Outer Mongolia) depicting a ram or an ibex in combination with the sun (Fig. 82: 4) was made, as said by the scholar who published it, in the middle of the first millennium B.C., i.e., after the Bronze Age; it belongs to the Tagar culture which produced artifacts abounding in solar symbols [476, pp. 193-198]. But such compositions are of much older origin. A similar design on a rock wall in Armenia (Fig. 82: 3) is dated to the third millennium B.C., another on Iranian pottery (Fig. 82: 5) dates from the fourth millennium B.C., i.e., the time when Western Asian religious conceptions of the early agricultural period had not yet been superseded by sun worship.

It is therefore more appropriate to assume that the horned animal in these designs appears in combination with a Neolithic heaven symbol rather than with the solar

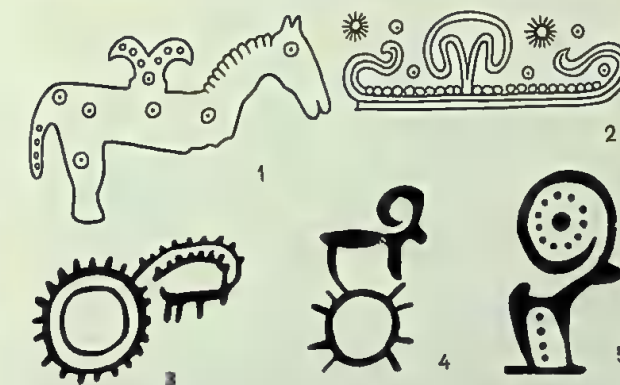




Fig. 82. Ram combined with sun or heaven: 1 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646, pl. 3]; 2 — Denmark, ca 1500 BC [719, p. 198]; 3 — rock wall picture, Armenia [340, p. 14]; 4 — Southern Siberia, ca 500 BC [315, p. 142]; 5 — Iran, Neolithic [729, p. 4].

symbol. Designs of this type emerged in the Neolithic and were later reinterpreted as an expression of the relationship between the ram and the sun, a relationship not accounted for in myths and apparently based on misconceptions.

We will return to the  image in connection with the heaven goddess, but let us now discuss the available evidence on the connection of the ram image with the earth god.

The Hebrew 'ail for 'ram' (as well as 'aial for 'deer' and 'eial for 'strength, power') seem to derive from the hypothetical name of the earth-god **el*. The Latin *ariēs* ('ram') appears to have the root *ar*, associated with the notion 'fire'.¹¹³ The Old Russian *agneś*, ancient Greek *agnos*, and Latin *agnus* mean 'sheep, lamb'; these words are obviously of the same root as the Lithuanian *ugnis*, Sanskrit and Hittite *agnis* ('fire'), and also the name of the ancient Indian fire deity Agni; the ram was believed to be an incarnation of Agni [371b, p. 238]. A Proto-Indo-European appellation for the ram **p(h)ek(h)* [108, p. 579] corresponds to Slavic words implying hot, fiery: the Russian *peku* ('I bake'), *peč* ('to bake'), Ukrainian *peklo* ('hell'). Fire was an incarnation of the earth god in early farming beliefs, consequently, the above linguistic associations indicate a certain relationship between the lamb and the earth god. These words are not intrinsically Indo-European, they are of Semitic or Western Asian origin. The Proto-Indo-European **p(h)ek(h)* clearly stems from the vanished languages of early farming tribes; one of the names of the underworld god has reached us as Pecols, Peko, etc.

Hacılar (Asia Minor) pottery dating from the fifth millennium B.C. carries designs indicating that ram horns symbolized vegetation. Spiral-shaped plant shoots resembling  horns issue from a quadrangle signifying earth (Fig. 83: 1-3), from a triangle which in this instance is also an earth symbol (Fig. 83: 4; the dots here designate seeds), and from a serrate pattern symbolizing tilled soil (Fig. 83: 6); they occur next to a zigzag which is a water sign (Fig. 83: 5, 7), and near parallel lines — water for soil irrigation (Fig. 208: 2).

Since the ram horn resembled the curvature of a plant shoot in its spiral shape, designs arose in the form of a pair of scrolls matching a pair of horns. A comparison of Figures 83: 6 and 84: 1 shows this origin of the symbol. In the first case one can see isolated combinations of earth and plant signs; in the second, the combination is paired. Figure 84: 2, which resembles a schematic representation of a pair of ram horns, actually depicts a pair of plant shoots growing from tilled soil. That this is so is confirmed by the representation of ram horns split at the ends like plant shoots (Fig. 84: 3, cf. Fig. 83: 4). Consequently, the oldest, Early Neolithic graphemes of a pair of spiral scrolls do not derive from the portrayal of the ram head (see also Fig. 84: 6). The ram image symbolically expressed the same


¹¹³Some authors thus interpret this root word. The  is indeed a part of the Sanskrit *arā* — an appellation for the sun, of the Russian *žar* and Sanskrit *hāras* ('heat'), of the Latin *ardeo* ('burn') and *ara* ('altar'; from **asa* — 'fire' [210a, p. 262]). Reconstructed Nostratic words include **yara* ('shine') and **nara* ('fire') [210a, p. 280; 210b, p. 85]. The Proto-Indo-European **ar* means 'fire,' the Hebrew *athar* — 'dense smoke,' the Proto-Indo-European appellation for the ram had the root **ur*.



Fig. 83. Scroll — vegetation sign: 1, 2, 4-8 — Asia Minor, 6000-5000 BC [764b, pp. 350, 383, 423, 323, 371]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 207].

notion as the spiral scrolls, i.e., the notion of vegetation, and its emergence was secondary, as a result of associative thinking.

In the Kura-Araks Aeneolithic culture¹¹⁴ there existed a specific mode of representing tilled soil as a triangle or quadrangle divided into cells which apparently designated land plots (Fig. 84: 4, 5). These designs, remotely suggestive of the schematic depiction of the ram head, at the same time represented earth with growing plants (in the second of these examples the sprouts occur in all four corners of the quadrangle representing land — cf. Fig. 83: 2).

In line with the notion of the "four directions," Neolithic symbolism placed four plant symbols around the earth sign. The classical variant of this pattern, which endured until the early 20th century in the decorative art of Western Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus, first appeared in the sixth millennium B.C. in Asia Minor (Fig. 84: 6). Shown in this design are: earth (quadrangle), terrestrial vegetation (four pairs of spirals), and rain watering the plants (strokes around the perimeter of the circle which symbolizes the sky). The same idea is expressed in another version (Fig. 84: 7): here earth is represented by its usual Neolithic symbol — the cross,¹¹⁵ with signs of vegetation hardly bearing resemblance to ram horns, around it. In Figure 84: 8, a rain cloud is seen above the form which may be understood both as designating plants and as schematically portraying a ram head. The anthropomorphic ram image in Figure 84: 9 is accompanied by rain clouds.

¹¹⁴The Kura-Araks culture existed mainly in the Southern Caucasus, Eastern Anatolia, and the Levant in the fourth and third millennia B.C.

¹¹⁵See chapter "The Four Directions."

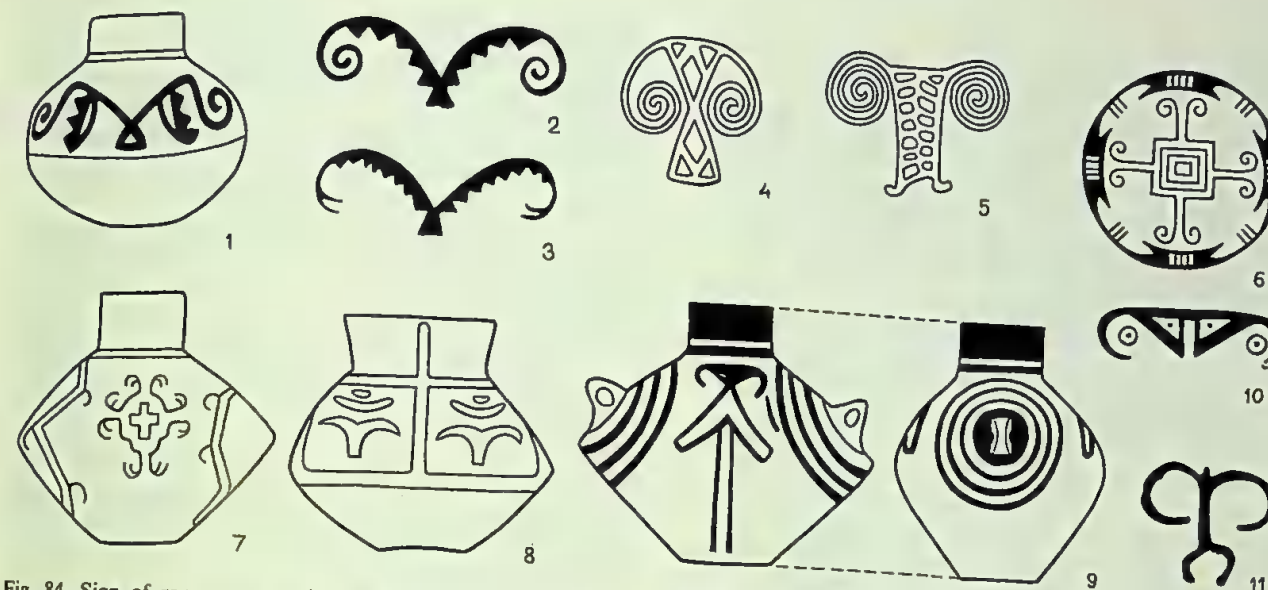


Fig. 84. Sign of ram — vegetation symbol: 1-3 — Asia Minor, 6000-5000 BC [764b, pp. 291, 353]; 4 — Southern Caucasus, ca 3000 BC [281, p. 162]; 5 — Daghestan, ca 2500 BC [387, p. 76]; 6-10 — Asia Minor, 6000-4000 BC [764b, pp. 399, 433, 419, 425, 379]; 11 — Armenia, Neolithic [369, p. 170].

These examples show that ram-horn spirals were pictured as plant shoots (as, for instance, man's primitive imagination saw the bull horn in the moon crescent, or a rain cloud in the comb shape). A bivolute motif which sometimes looked like a stylized plant (Fig. 85: 1-3) was widely diffused in the Ancient Orient under the influence of the symbol in the form of a pair of ram horns. In addition to these examples, Figure 85: 4, in which the spirals have protrusions imitating the texture of ram horns (cf. Fig. 74: 1), may be relevant to the origin of this motif.

In pre-Aryan India, a notion also existed of the semantic connection between vegetation and ram (or bull) horns [677, p. 183]. As the ram symbolized vegetation, it apparently produced the mythological conception of the fleece as a symbol of fertility [371b, p. 238].

The ram figured in springtime rites associated with the religious-mythological idea of the resurrection of the deity of vegetation. Two weeks after the vernal equinox, "the whole of Egypt rejoiced at the return of Aries (the Ram) to his rule. The people decorated the ram with flowers and escorted it in eminently festive ceremonial processions" [405, p. 28]. This ancient pagan festivity subsequently developed into Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Ritual Easter food in various European countries includes a roasted lamb. During the Easter holidays, a wooden lamb or a figurine depicting Christ was carried aloft [228b, pp. 25, 212, 331]. Jesus was sometimes portrayed as a lamb in early Christian pictures. Mountain-dwelling Georgians (Pshavs, Khevsurs) considered God in heaven the god of the living, and Christ the god of the dead [335, p. 108]; this was because Christ replaced the pagan deity who, among other functions, had chthonic significance, and was personified by the ram.

The ancient Jewish Passover ritual also involved lamb sacrifices, which is at variance with the substance of the festival, dedicated in Jewish tradition to the Exodus from

Egypt. In earlier times the western Semites sacrificed their first-born sons to their god, as did the settled agricultural tribes they assimilated. Then the sacrifice was substituted by a lamb. Such a motif is echoed in biblical Passover story (the Jews had to immolate lambs in order to avert the threat that their children would be beaten, and a ram was a substitute for Isaac in Abraham's sacrificial offering to God).

The major folklore personage of the Jewish Passover, Eliahu (Elijah), has nothing to do with the Exodus from Egypt; his name is an epithet of the pre-Semitic underworld god **hām*, meaning 'scorching, burning'.¹¹⁶ The Passover ritual contains a didactic conversation between a father and his sons; perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that the pagan vernal feast was dedicated to the resurrection of the divine son. Unleavened bread, wine, and bitter root are the ritual food and drink at the Passover; this earthly produce is associated with the image of the archaic earth god, a topic to be discussed later. Also eaten are eggs, a material symbol of the underworld dragon. The number 4 is symbolic in the Passover ritual: 4 ritual requirements, 4 cups, 4 benedictions, 4 sons, 4 questions; is this not because four was the earth god's sacred number? Yet another point of interest: could it be chance that the celebration of the Exodus of distant ancestors from captivity coincided with a festival dedicated to the deity of earthly growth? In Georgian tradition, the deity of fertility Lomisi, traditionally honored during the Easter holidays, was the one who liberated the Georgians from Turkish captivity. The epithet for Lomisi in ritual texts is "liberator from captivity" [584, p. 14]. The names Lomisi and Moses are similar in sound (the root *m.s*).

There is no doubt about the historical stay of the ancestors of the Jews in Egypt and their exodus, for no legend could be trustworthy to such an extent (how could such a legend have arisen unless it was based on real events?); the personality of Moses, whatever his authentic name, is also unquestionable, for realistic images such as his are not

¹¹⁶The affix *-hu* is a reduced pronoun of the third person, masculine gender, i.e., 'he,' though a different etymology of this name is also possible (see chapter "The White God").



Fig. 85. Bivolute motif in Eastern Mediterranean: 1-3 — Crete, ca 1500 BC [676c, pp. 766-780]; 4 — Cyclades, ca 2200 BC [868, p. 210].

commonly encountered in myths. But perhaps the biblical Exodus story was a superposition of actual events on a myth?

The God of Israel is repeatedly called "He who delivered us from Egypt." The Exodus theme occupies an outstanding place in Judaic cult texts. It comes to mind that this is all far in excess of the event's significance.

Micraim is the Hebrew name for Egypt. The word implies 'a pair of gorges' or 'a pair of sorrows.' If one takes the normal evolution of a word from the concrete to the abstract, the meaning 'gorge, pass' must have been primary (true, the stem *m-ṣ-r* expresses the notion of restriction, narrowing down; *ṣar m-ṣar* 'narrow, tight'). But Egypt, especially the northern plain where the Hebrews lived, is far from being a gorge. The gorge in this case means the underworld. The grammatical form of the name Micraim is also significant: it is dual as in *maim* ('water, waters'), *šamaim* ('heaven, sky'), *ṣohoraim* ('midday') — words apparently connected with the mythicization of the structure of the universe. Indeed, why *micraim*, i.e., a pair of gorges, rather than *maṣar* ('gorge') or *miṣrim* ('gorges')?

The welcoming of the Sabbath starts with the blessing of wine, an earthly produce. The verbal formula of the benediction reads that the Sabbath is dedicated to the seventh day of the Creation and to the Exodus from "Micraim," i.e., Exodus is made equivalent in significance to the creation of the world. Judging by surviving scraps of myths, there was a belief in remote antiquity that people once dwelt in the underworld and were delivered from it by a divine hero. In this light one can better understand the postulate of the Jewish tradition that the Exodus was the event which gave rise to the Jewish nation.

Earthly vegetation, annually reborn only to fade or be cut down during harvest time, was likened to a dying and resurgent god. The ram symbolizing vegetation represented

this deity, and thus, the ram image acquired chthonic connotations. So it was, for example, in Ancient Greece, as testified directly [225, p. 262], and in the Caucasus, judging by the common occurrence there of gravestones in the form of sculptured ram representations. Black was in the form of the soil which produces plants, and the color symbol of the soil which produces plants, and that was why the black ram was particularly revered in Daghestan. This must also have been an expression of the fact, shown by certain evidence, that the deity of vegetation was somehow identified with the earth god. For example, since healing powers were ascribed to the earth god, sick people were wrapped in a fresh ram fleece.

In Ancient Egypt, the conception of a dying and resurgent god found expression in the cult of Osiris. Osiris was sometimes represented by the ram [251, p. 21], not infrequently identified with the god-ram Ammon; funeral sermon texts mention either Ammon or Osiris. Osiris was the son of earth and heaven, though Isis, who has some characteristics of the Neolithic heaven goddess, was his wife. Osiris himself possessed features not only of the deity of vegetation, but also of the earth god. Either because the god-ram was considered an offspring of the divine parents earth and heaven, or because of his identity with the earth god who was believed to ensure conception, Ammon was associated with the mystery of conception [640, p. 194].

In Mesopotamia, the dying and resurgent god was named Tammuz. Every year he died and disappeared in the underworld. His beloved Ishtar (by numerous indications the Neolithic heaven goddess and, consequently, his mother) went to look for him and resuscitated him, as Isis did for Osiris. The name Tammuz derives from the Sumerian Dumuzi which means 'true son.'

Corresponding to Mesopotamian Tammuz is Phoenician-Syrian Adon. This word, meaning 'master', derives from *ad, dad* ('father') [730, p. 33]. The cult of Adon is believed to have been adopted by the Greeks from the Semites. However, the Hellenes were so persistent in observing the rituals of mourning the god's death and celebrating his resurrection, that one may feel justified in suggesting that the cult existed in Ancient Greece from time immemorial. What was borrowed from the Semites was the god's name, which took the Greek form Adonis.

Very popular in Asia Minor were rites associated with the myth of Attis; Attis and Adonis were not infrequently identified with each other. The name Attis also means 'father.' Isn't it curious that the deity representing the son was referred to as "father"? Attis was the lover of Cybele (the ancient Greek mythological image derived from the Neolithic Great Goddess). Eating bread was avoided during the period of mourning for the death of Attis; this was apparently because he was the deity of grain. He was, indeed, identified with rye, ears of grain were his emblem, the words "highly fertile," "sheared rye ear" were his epithets [557, pp. 41, 42].

The early farmers' cult conceptions spread, with certain modifications, almost worldwide. Similarly, echoes of the myth about the god dying and rising from the dead and his sister, the rescuer, spread beyond the area of the ancient Oriental cultures. There is a female personage named Satana in an Osset epic (among other things, she was connected with water). This name may be regarded as

a feminine version of the earth god's name Seth, Sata, Satan. The epic of the Alans, ancestors of the Ossets, also has a heroine called Satnik, who, judging by some of her characteristics, matches the sister-wife of the ancient Oriental god who dies and returns to life: she endures hardships in order to rescue her brother, and her feelings towards her brother are too wifely.

Alongside myths about the dying and resuscitated god popular in the Ancient Orient were myths about a captive and liberated god. Such, for example, are traditions about Babylonian Marduk and Syrian Baal; these divinities possess certain traits of the Neolithic earth god.

Telepinus, a character in a Hittite myth, was borrowed from Hattian mythology, where his name was Talipinu. This mythological name is repeatedly encountered outside Asia Minor: Etruscan Telepas, Georgian Tulepia, Greek Teleph, Adygeian Tlepš. A Ukrainian fairy tale tells about a boy whom an evil demon strived to ruin, and a sister who saved him; the name of this personage is Telesik. Without the diminutive suffix *-ik*, the root of the name is *Teles*. This is apparently a key to the origin of the Slavic word *teleč* ('bull, calf') of unknown etymology.¹¹⁷ Telesik or *telyonok* ('calf') is the son of a bull, therefore he is also connected with the nether realm. As the underworld god was considered the giver of riches, the expression "golden calf" ("gold, money, wealth") becomes clear. The Adygeian Tlepš also has characteristics of the underworld god: he is a smith, the lord of fire, and a healer.

The name Talipinu is interpreted as "son of Tali" [371b, p. 498]. This etymology needs to be checked taking into account the fact that some variants of the name have the suffix *-p/s* instead of the second part *-pinu*. It seems more correct to correlate the second part of the name with the Hattian *unnu* ('small'); then the root *Tali+p/f* remains intact. Tali, Dali, Tari, Taru, Tarhu was the Hattian-Hittite thundergod, i.e., the Neolithic god of earth and the underworld. The supreme mother-goddess was considered Talipinu's mother. Telepinus did not die and revive, but disappeared and came back. He had been kidnapped by the vicious demon Hahimas who caused a devastating drought. The goddess dispatched a bee which stung the sleeping Telepinus, who woke up and returned home. He brought with him a sheepskin sack filled with gifts from the earth god ("grains of the fields and wine") and hung it on a sacred evergreen tree. Echoes of the Asia Minor myth about a sheepskin hanging from a tree were absorbed in the Greek myth of the Argonauts, who sailed in search of the Golden Fleece hanging in the sacred grove at Colchis and guarded by a dragon.

The myth about resurrection of a dead god or liberation of a captive god is obviously an interpretation of the annual revival of vegetation. However, scholars differ about another element of the myth: the god's violent death or captivity. Mourning the death of Tammuz in Babylon and bemoaning Adonis in Greece was timed at midsummer or the end of summer. Some authors believe that in this case the death of a mythical being is a harvest allegory (indeed,

¹¹⁷ The Proto-Slavic **tele* and the Lithuanian *tėlis* ('calf') are comparable to the Greek *ptēlas* ('hog') and the Lithuanian *lokys* ('bear') [543d, p. 38]. This is perfectly normal, since these animals represented the earth god, as will be shown below.

if the ear of grain is a divine incarnation, it is "killed" when reaped). Others maintain that it meant the withering of vegetation by summer heat (when Telepinus was kidnapped, a drought ensued).

But what does a "god's death" in February mean?

Here we must return to the motif of the bull slain by the lion. According to W. Hartner [711], at about 4000 B.C. at the latitude of Sumer, the constellation Taurus disappeared below the horizon on the 10th of February, to reappear in 40 days, on the 22nd of March. The first of these astral events took place when field work started in Mesopotamia, the second when the first shoots of the winter crops emerged (this second event coincided with the vernal equinox).

If the appearance of shoots is seen as the god's resurrection, the seed interred in the soil must be an allegory of his inhumation. This is probably why some myths do not deal with the god's death but rather with his taking himself off to the underground (the god is freed through his sister's efforts; this aspect of the myth seems to be an allegory of the sun promoting germination).

The chapter "The Four Seasons" will discuss in detail the origin of two pagan festivals: the Slavic Koračun or Roman Saturnalia (the second half of December) and the Slavic Masleniça (Shrovetide) or Western European Carnival (in February); the former may be interpreted as a cult rite on the underworld god's falling asleep for the winter, the latter as a feast dedicated to his awakening.

Seth who killed Osiris is the underworld god. Attis, a Greek analogue of Egyptian Osiris, was killed by a wild boar in a version of the myth; but the boar is an incarnation of the underworld god. It may be conjectured why the lord of the underworld did this: Attis was the lover of Cybele, i.e., of the Great Goddess, the spouse of the hibernating god. When the awesome god woke up and learned the truth, he was very angry. Other interpretations of the theme are also possible; it was conjectured earlier in this book that ancient Oriental representations of a bull being slain by a lion may be set alongside the myth about the underworld god killing another underworld creature — the deer who had stolen the sun maiden from the sleeping god.

Finally, it cannot be ruled out that the Mesopotamian bull falling prey to the lion is not the earth god, but rather the god of earthly vegetation. Quite possibly the Sumerians or their predecessors pictured the god of terrestrial vegetation as a bull because they had their specific views of this mythological personage. Besides, the fact that there is no clear-cut differentiation between the images of the deities of earth and of earthly vegetation, which are often confused in myths (and also in graphic symbols), could play a role. Osiris, for example, has features characterizing him as a personification of both earth and earthly plants; a variant of the Hittite Telepinus myth refers to him as a weathergod, the title being applicable to the underworld god. Other facts may also be cited to show that the images of earth and vegetation gods were mixed. A version of the myth describing the birth of Zeus (i.e., the father-god) maintains that he was born and died every year [661, pp. 15, 16], which is a description of the god-son. The name Adonis for the suffering god is connected with the Semitic

adon ("lord"), more suited to the god of the earth and the underworld. Dionysus is the son of Zeus and Demeter, i.e., the god-son; but he was pictured as a bull, a billy goat, or a bear, the phallus being his symbol, all these characteristic of the earth and underworld god. Dionysus was considered an incarnation of his father Zeus [605, p. 243]. His archaic prototype was Zagreus, meaning "great hunter," which is among the descriptions of the underworld god. The half-stag, half-bull image of Paleolithic paintings in India seems to be due to the notion that the deer, an earthly being, is endowed with characteristics of the earth god; the latter could be the stag's father. The Christian concept that Christ and God the Father are one is thus a continuation of a certain religious tradition, conforming to a primitive, yet comprehensible, idea: the son is an incarnation of the father.

If the constellation Taurus reappeared on the 22nd of March, that must have been the time of the feast dedicated to the god's resurrection. The resurrection of Attis was celebrated in Ancient Rome on the 25th of March (Romans considered this the date of vernal equinox). This festival was dedicated not only to the reviving god, but also to the Great Goddess: the 25th of March was the day of Hera or Juno, respectively, in Ancient Greece and Rome. Christ's resurrection also fell on the 25th of March in early Christianity [558, p. 75]. In 525 C.E., it was postponed to April, more specifically within the time span from the 22nd of March to the 25th of April (the Church calendar was based on the flexible Jewish one). The 25th of March was recorded as the Feast of the Annunciation. On that day, determined by the Church, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear a Son of God. This legend matches semantically the Greek and Roman reference to the 25th of March as the day of Hera or Juno. Some very remote feast must have taken place on that day not only in the pre-Christian period, but also before Classical Antiquity. Slavs call March 24-25 "the bear holiday" and "the snake holiday," for it is said that the bear leaves its den and snakes creep out of the ground on that day. Some ancient authors wrote that man was created on March 25. Most probably March 25 (or 22) was the day of the resurrection of a god in around 4000 B.C., then coinciding both with the vernal equinox and another conspicuous celestial phenomenon: the rise of a constellation associated with that particular god.

However, not only does the Earth make a yearly revolution round the Sun; the Sun changes its position in the Galaxy, with the result that the stars change their position in the sky, although slowly in comparison to human lifetime. The constellation Taurus rises and sets one day later approximately every 150 years. That is probably why the feast of Aries the Ram was celebrated in Ancient Egypt two weeks after the equinox.¹¹⁸

Easter is a joyous feast commemorating Christ's resur-

¹¹⁸ The datings of ancient holidays should be regarded as conventional, because there were no accurate calendars in ancient times, and also because one cannot be sure that the duration of the astronomic solar year is invariable. Some experts believe that it is subject to fluctuations; in my opinion, for example, between 1500 and 800 B.C. the solar year consisted of 360 days, while the lunar month had 30 days.

rection. Yet there is a touch of mourning in it: observant Christians pray for their dead at Easter. The feast of the god's resurrection in Ancient Rome was also accompanied by remembrance of the dead. In Athens the deceased were remembered in the middle of March, when the first flowers appeared; the day was referred to as "the feast of flowers." The Greeks believed that the dead rose from their graves, i.e., came back to life, on that day [558, p. 55].

The mourning element of Easter is apparently not only due to associations of this kind. Easter rituals suggest that the corresponding pagan feast was dedicated not solely to the god of earthly vegetation, but also to the earth god whose image was of chthonic significance. Fire and bonfires are an essential feature of Easter rites, fire being an attribute of the earth god. Easter customs of pouring water on people, ritual washing, washing cattle, and sprinkling buildings, yards, and property are not of chance nature: water is an attribute of the god of the nether universe. There is a popular belief that on Easter (as on Christmas) night one can conclude an alliance with the devil, i.e., with the former earth god. Easter eggs (an attribute of the serpent), a phallus-shaped cake, ritual laughter (typical of the devil) are all characteristics of the earth god. Attributes of the earth god in the feast commemorating the resurrection of the god of earthly vegetation indicate that there was no clear distinction between the two deities.

Easter is preceded by forty days of fasting, which the Church interprets as an expression of grief over Christ's ordeal and death. In the early farming period, these forty days stood between the death and resurrection of the deity personifying earthly fertility. In the Cybele cult of Asia Minor, festivities commemorating the resurrection of Attis were preceded by a fast symbolizing Cybele's distress over his death. The most fanatical adherents of the cult showed their sympathy with Cybele by self-mutilation. The corresponding Egyptian and Mesopotamian myths also involved the grief experienced by Isis (Ishtar) seeking the dead Osiris (Tammuz). In Judaism the fast of Esther falls during this period. The ritual mourning preceding the feast of the resurrection of the deity of vegetation must have been an element of a corresponding early farmers' cult, since it was adopted in Europe most certainly independently of the Christian or ancient Oriental religions. In Scandinavia, on the eve of Easter, people even now dress in black, theaters and restaurants are closed and newspapers are not issued [228, p. 116].

All this is sufficient evidence against the opinion that religious fasts had a rational basis. Neither does this opinion conform to common sense: no reasons of health or economy could lead to alternate abstention and excessive eating and drinking (one is supposed to eat a lot before the fast, during Shrovetide, and after the fast on Easter).

Fasting is associated with sad events in various religions. Since ancient times people have fasted before dangerous and crucial undertakings. The Hebrew history of the Purim festival reads that Esther fasted three days before she approached the king with the request that he cancel the order to exterminate the Jews, and all the Jews had to join her in the fast; was this not a way of propitiating the supreme powers? There is a Jewish custom of fasting after a bad dream to "compensate" for it, to annul it. Calendar fasts

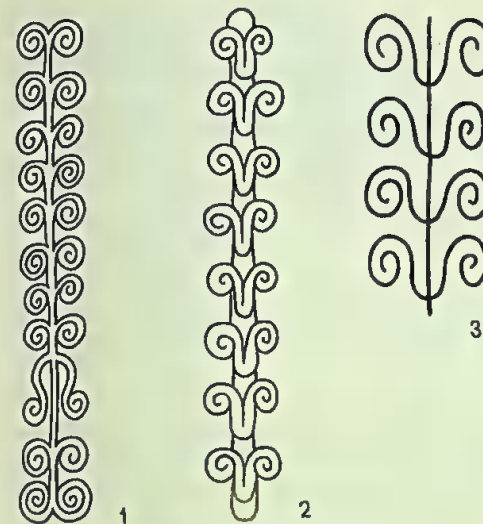


Fig. 86. Tiered horn compositions: 1 — design on a stone in a mosque wall, Daghestan, Tsurayi; 2 — Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 75]; 3 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [14, pl. 34].



Fig. 87. Combination of ram horns and earth deity symbol: 1 — moulding on a fireplace, Daghestan, Godoberi [378, p. 112]; 2 — element of Ossetian embroidery [574, pl. 11]; 3 — ornament on ceramic ware, Southern Caucasus, 3000-2000 BC [281, p. 162].

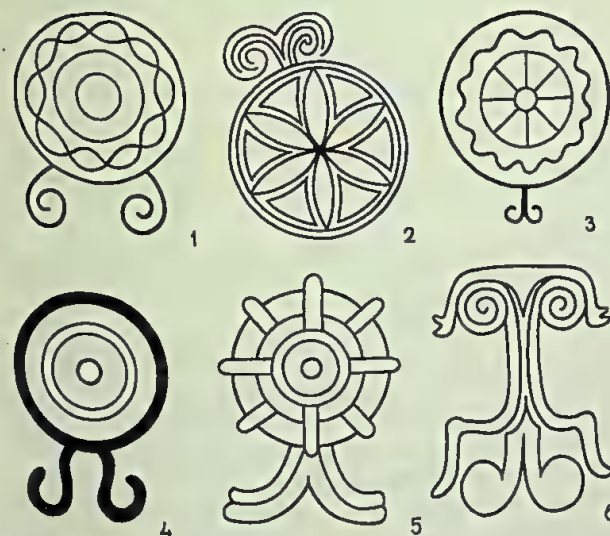


Fig. 88. Combination of disk and pair of scrolls: 1 — carved stone in a tower wall, 18th c., Daghestan, Musrukhi; 2 — design on a carved wooden box, Daghestan, 19th c. [358, p. 24]; 3 — Sarmatian, 3rd c. [495, p. 37]; 4 — Libya, 19th c. [712, pl. 26]; 5 — Ancient Mexico [832, p. 43]; 6 — Sicily, ca 2800 BC [782c, pl. 430].

in Judaism are explained as an expression of mourning and humbleness. Leviticus tells in connection with the fast on the Day of Atonement: "By fasting humble thyself." If a Jew accidentally drops his phylacteries, he must atone for this sin by fasting, i.e., impose a punishment on himself.

Ramadan is a strict fast for Muslims. The Islamic calendar is a sliding one, so that the fast may fall at different times of the year, in itself proof that it is not related to natural or farming conditions. Muslims must abstain from food and drink between dawn and sunset on all days of the fast. What has economics to do with it? In addition, no form of self-gratification is permitted. The observant Muslim must not moisten his head for relief from the heat, nor even swallow his own saliva or take medicine. Isn't this deliberate self-torture? But from sunset to dawn it is permitted to eat, drink, and give oneself up to all earthly delights, even all through the night, as much as one's strength permits. What is the reason for all this? Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic year, nine being the number associated with the underworld god. The pagan Arabs dedicated the month of Ramadan to the moon, i.e., to the underworld god.¹¹⁹

But let us return to the graphic symbols of the sacred ram.

The design consisting of tiers of paired volutes (Fig. 86) appears to be a multiple repetition of the symbol, enhancing its significance. The combinations of ram and bull horns (Fig. 87: 1, 2) or ram horns and the snake (Fig. 87: 3) express a connection between terrestrial vegetation and the earth god.

Other designs express the relationship between plants and the heaven goddess. The composition in Figure 84: 8 could perhaps be interpreted rationally as something like "clouds pouring rain on plants"; but the picture in Figure 83: 8 strikes one in a different way: "the heaven goddess, mistress of rain clouds, brings life to plants." An ancient Roman dedicational inscription refers to the Great Mother as the one who "produces plants." A corresponding Russian expression may be translated into English as "It is heaven rather than earth which bears crops"; it is said in the Bible that heaven provides bread. There is a European folk legend about the "mother of crops" who, by the way, may choose to ruin the harvest (a characteristic feature of the Great Goddess).

The notion "bread and salt" is of symbolic significance for the Russians. Salt, being white, was presumably conceived of as an attribute of the Great Goddess. The combination "bread and salt" thus expressed the idea "heaven + harvest," i.e., symbolized a wish for fertility. Bread and salt is offered on a towel which, as will be shown in the appropriate place, was an accessory of the cult of the goddess.

The Sumerian *amar-an*, "a sacred animal," literally means "a calf of heaven" [509, p. 237]. This term apparently reflects the notion, older than the Sumerian religion, of a sacred animal fathered by a bull, the heaven goddess being the mother.

¹¹⁹ If one seeks a rational explanation for every superstition, one will certainly find it here, too: "It is possible that the custom to abstain from eating and drinking for a period of time is underlain by the necessity to train nomad Arabs in endurance" [168, p. 58].



Fig. 89. Symbol of upside-down ram horns on ceramic vessels: 1 — Troy [827, p. 214]; 2 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 33]; 3 — Tajikistan [124, p. 6]; 4 — Northeastern Caucasus, ca 2000 BC [327, p. 63]; 5—7 — fragments of ancient pottery from Greece, India and Malta [858, pp. 42, 23].



Fig. 90. Symbol of upside-down ram horns, Bronze Age: 1 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [825, p. 91]; 2 — Italy, ca 2500 BC [719, p. 461]; 3 — Sweden, rock wall picture [719, p. 235]; 4 — Malta, ca 2000 BC [810, p. 53]; 5 — Armenia, ca 2000 BC [372, p. 141]; 6 — Etruscan, ca 600 BC [692, pl. 82].



Fig. 91. Double ram horn symbol: 1 — Ancient Greece [643, p. 25]; 2 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 67]; 3 — Tajik, 19th c. [23, p. 29]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764, p. 383].

A female figure sprouting plants, as well as images of a woman giving birth to a ram, found in the Çatal-Hüyük sanctuary [762, p. 125], illustrate the concept that the mother of nature produces terrestrial vegetation. The design of a disk and two abutting spiral-shaped sprouts (Fig. 88: 1-5) conveys the same meaning. The disk in these diagrams is a heaven symbol; this is indicated by its details. The disk often consists of concentric circles. It may contain rain signs in the form of radial lines or signs of water symbolizing the dew of heaven. The notion "water" is expressed by a wavy line, its common designation, or by a plait (Fig. 88: 1) which is also a sign of water (Fig. 136: 2).

Incidentally, the heaven emblem (Fig. 88: 1) engraved on the wall of a 17th-century tower in a remote Daghestan settlement high in the mountains coincides with a design on a Trojan spinning plummet [827, Table 23]; a similar emblem existed in pre-Columbian America [505, p. 144].

The design of a disk and two abutting spirals compares both structurally and semantically with another design depicting an anthropomorphic figure with a ram sign issuing from its perineum (Fig. 88: 6). That this is a female figure is indicated, in particular, by the detail above it, resembling an overturned Russian letter III. This symbol appears above the head of the goddess in some ancient pictures (Fig. 342). It is a trident, a reduced sign of the comb, i.e., of rain (Fig. 358: 8); this is a symbol of the Great Goddess (cf. Figs. 306: 1, 2 and 31: 3).

Consequently, the design composed of a disk and a pair of adjacent spiral scrolls was originally an ideograph of the notion "the goddess, the mother of nature (= heaven) gives birth to a ram (= earthly plants)." However, when the disk came to be regarded as a solar symbol, this ideograph came to be understood as "the ram and the sun," although there is no actual sense in this interpretation. The ram sign thus acquired solar meaning.

It is noteworthy that the spiral scrolls almost always abut on the lower portion of the disk. This may be because the disk is a conventional sign for the goddess, and the female generative organ is in the lower part of the body. In the designs from Çatal-Hüyük mentioned above, the head of the ram born by the goddess is also beneath her figure.

The following circumstance should also be noted. Since the pair of spiral scrolls growing out of the disk abut on it from below, it forms an overturned ram symbol. This explains why the ram sign was frequently represented upside down (Fig. 89). Indeed, when depicted on a clay vessel, it often abuts on the decorative rim (Fig. 89: 2, 6, 7) as it abutted on the disk.

The overturned bivolute sign is often encountered in European and Western Asian antiquities (Fig. 90). Deriving from a certain Neolithic symbol, it must have lost its former semantics during the Bronze Age and, as the ram image was at that time associated with the solar deity, it was probably perceived by post-Neolithic people as an analogy to the sign of an overturned half-sun, i.e., the setting sun.

A symbol composed of two bivolute shapes, upright and overturned (Fig. 91: 1-3), is encountered in different parts of Europe and Western Asia. Its semantics is not clear. Possibly it was understood as an expression of sunrise and

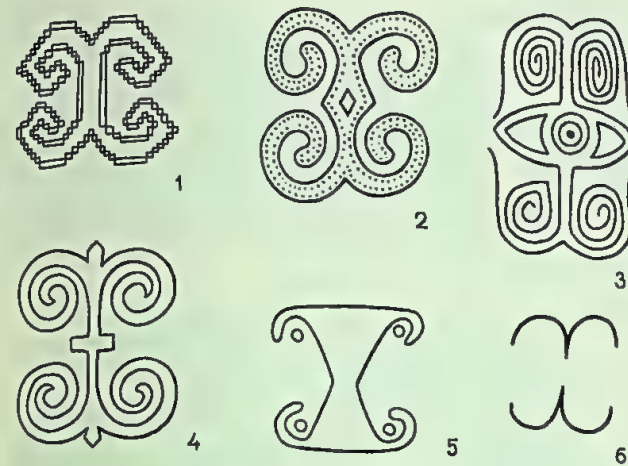


Fig. 92. Symbol in the shape of X: 1 — pattern on ancient Daghestan rug; 2 — Western Europe, Early Bronze Age [719, p. 397]; 3 — North American Indian [630, p. 25]; 4 — Altai, 19th c. [419, p. 237]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, p. 379]; 6 — sign on a stone, Daghestan, Dusrakh.



Fig. 93. M-shaped sign: 1 — ornaments on pottery, 2500 BC, Daghestan coast [390, pp. 151, 152; 322, pp. 44, 45]; 2, 3 — Koban culture of North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646b, pls. 59, 9]; 4 — Germany, Neolithic [746, p. 261].

sunset, like other Neolithic compositions which, from the point of view of sun worshipers, looked like an illustration of the corresponding subject (Fig. 56: 4). The earliest design of this kind, which could be a prototype of the symbol, is observed on Asia Minor pottery from the sixth—fifth millennia B.C. (Fig. 91: 4). The upper element of this design appears to designate a ram being born by the goddess, while the lower portion designates terrestrial vegetation (cf. Fig. 144: 3-6).

There is also a symbol composed of two bispiral signs in a different combination, in the shape of the letter X (Fig. 92). It may be semantically similar to other doubled earth symbols (Fig. 294). The X-shaped symbol or ornamental motif was used from the Neolithic (Fig. 92: 5) until the

nineteenth century (Fig. 92: 6), in Western Europe (Fig. 92: 2), in the Altai (Fig. 92: 4), in mountainous Daghestan (Fig. 92: 1), and among American Indians (Fig. 92: 3). In the light of this knowledge K. Berladina's observation sounds strange. Analyzing this ornamental element in Ossetian folk art she writes: "The bilateral Koban tendril (see Fig. 77: 6) acquires a complicated shape here, issuing from the two ends of the rod upwards and downwards" [574, p. 10]. This reasoning is typical of those who see ornamental designs in folk art as simply creative artistic fancy. It is also typical where an analysis is confined to a certain territory and no endeavor is made to see what goes on outside it. The bispiral motif is not the "Koban tendril"; it was quite common over a vast territory long before the emergence of the Koban culture, and the X-shaped motif is widespread in ornaments outside Ossetia.

The bispiral symbol deriving from the portrayal of the ram head or horns, was transformed in the process of simplification (a usual substitution of broken lines for curves) into an M-like shape (Fig. 93). In many cases this is the only adornment on clay vessels from the third to second millennia B.C. found in Daghestan, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran. It remained a decorative motif until the 18th—20th centuries (Fig. 94), though its meaning was long forgotten.

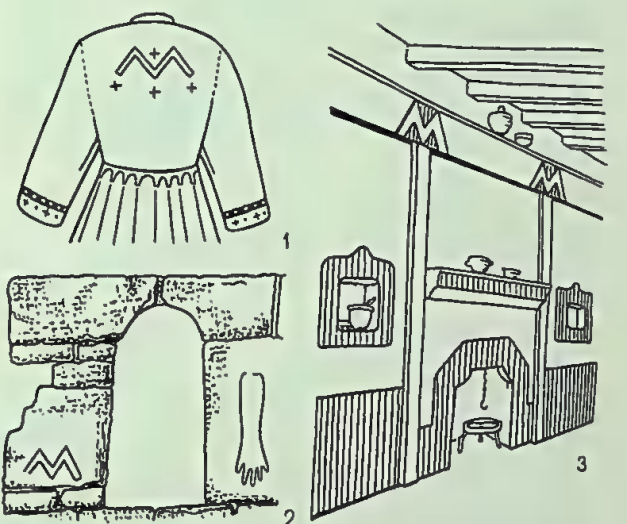


Fig. 94. M-shaped sign in decorative art of Caucasus, 17th—20th c.: 1 — ornament on Khevsur clothing [307, p. 130]; 2 — symbols on stones of a tower in Chechnia, Khairakh [367, p. 38]; 3 — decoration of a fireplace in Daghestan, Karabudakhkent.



Fig. 95. Upside-down M-shaped sign: 1 — Crimea, ca 300 BC [106, p. 196]; 2 — Hungary, Bronze Age [719, p. 413].

The M-shaped sign, like the bivolute symbol, was sometimes overturned (Fig. 95).

Ancient pottery found on the territory of present-day Northern Iraq and Western Iran exhibits M-shaped signs arranged in chains (Fig. 96: 1, 2), resembling lines of birds in flight. In some cases such an ornament clearly represents birds (Fig. 96: 3). This is an example of how similar signs may be of dissimilar origin. Possibly the M-shaped sign deriving from the schematic bird representation influenced the transformation of the bispiral ram sign into the M symbol.

The ornamental motif of a pair of spirals is widespread among many peoples all over the world (Fig. 97). In some cases it was borrowed from early farmers or from ancient Indo-European tribes as an ornament or as a symbol, though in other cases it was of local origin, not representing horns, but conveying a different meaning. For example, a bispiral ornamental motif in New Guinea (Fig. 97: 5) depicts fish-hooks and seems to symbolize prosperity, well-being. In China, a pair of spirals represented a cloud (Fig. 97: 7). Yet, in these cases the prototype of the symbol (a fish-hook, a cloud) did not predetermine the symmetrical bispiral composition. It is hard to account for the emergence of such designs among

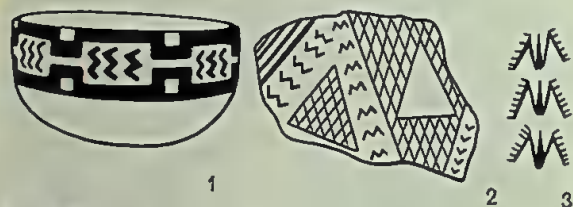


Fig. 96. Semantics of M-shaped sign: 1 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [353, p. 165]; 2, 3 — Ancient Iran [858, p. 49; 716, p. 361].

DOUBLE SPIRAL

The spiral is a grapheme known in many ethnic cultures. It figures in artifacts of all periods, starting from the Paleolithic. Such a design could be produced independently in different places, at different times, under dissimilar preconditions, and may therefore convey different meanings. Its semantics should be judged within the general context. Certain pretentious deliberations on the semantics of the spiral, claiming to be comprehensive, remain unproved, however categorically expressed, and evoke bewilderment. For example, it is stated as being beyond question that the spiral symbolizes the continuous movement of the sun [170, p. 227]. There are also other dicta on the subject. This is how H. Kühn, a venerable German author of half a dozen books on the art of prehistoric Europe, interprets ancient spiral-like drawings: "The spiral means return, arrival and departure, birth and death, sunrise and sunset, coming into being and dying. The spiral has no beginning and no end, it is an image of water, wave, movement,

peoples of the Far East and Oceania, unless one assumes that they were formed under the influence of the European and Western Asian bivolute emblem.

The following, in addition to other evidence, may offer evidence that such transcontinental influences did occur. A Maori sculpture of a fabulous creature with a pair of spirals on the chest was found in New Zealand (Fig. 370: 5), the spirals being designed in such a way that one can recognize snakes in them (Fig. 97: 8). The goddess in early farming cultures of Southeastern Europe was also portrayed with snakes on her body (Fig. 129).

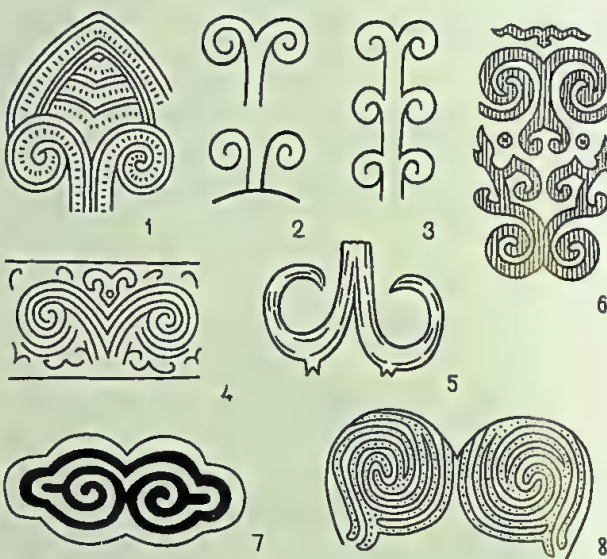


Fig. 97. Double spiral diagram: 1—4, 6 — New Zealand, New Guinea, Benin, Ghilyak (on Amur River), and Malaysia [760, pls. 2, 9, 22, 27]; 5 — New Guinea [360, p. 46]; 7 — China [203, p. 392]; 8 — New Zealand [297, fig. 33].

top and bottom, heaven and hell, Yang and Yin" [742, p. 167]. This definition, however, can hardly be of much value to an inquirer into ancient cult symbolism.

In some cases one may succeed, by way of comparison, to establish semantic identity of the spiral and concentric circles. This was discussed above.

Ancient art has an image of the snake rolled into a spiral (Fig. 98: 2), providing a basis for concluding that the spiral may designate a snake. A zigzag with dots (Fig. 98: 3) designated water or a river giving water for seeds (Fig. 133: 8) in the symbolism of the European and Western Asian Neolithic, but it could also designate a snake in such a context (Fig. 133: 1), since the snake was identified with water.¹²¹ Now, since water and a river cannot roll up in

¹²⁰ Yang and Yin are terms in Chinese mythology for heaven and earth and also the male and female principles in nature.

¹²¹ See chapter "Snake-Water."

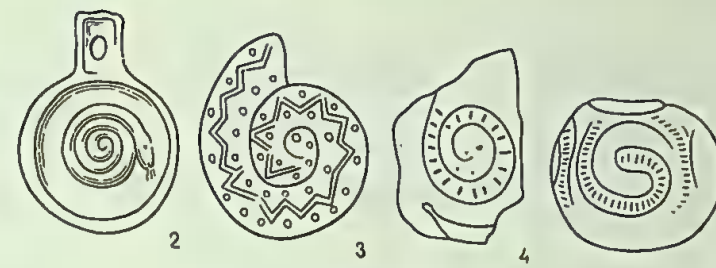


Fig. 98. Spiral as snake design: 1 — Daghestan, Dusrakh; 2 — Alanian (North Caucasian plain, Middle Ages) [368, p. 197]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 96]; 4, 5 — Germany, Neolithic [719, p. 295].



Fig. 99. Double spiral on carved stones in Daghestan: 1 — Tsnal, mosque, ca 1900; 2 — Kurag, mosque, ca 1900; 3 — Itsari, tower, 12th c.; 4 — Ashty, 18th c. structure.

Unlike a simple spiral, the bispiral S-shaped sign is quite common in the architectural ornamentation of Daghestan, occurring both individually and in various combinations (Fig. 99).

This figure can be found on all continents. Being elementary, it could have emerged convergently in a number of cases. Yet, the following circumstance must be taken into consideration. Enormous quantities of various graphic characters exist (by way of example: tribal emblems or runic characters [283; 427]), but only a few graphemes, and the same everywhere, became venerated symbols. They include the S figure, treated by different peoples during different periods of history as a sign full of meaning and significance (Fig. 100). American Indians used this sign relatively seldom, African and Australian aborigines extremely seldom; in most of Asia it occurs generally in ornamental patterns devoid of meaning; but in Europe and Western Asia, this grapheme is remarkably common, and very often its rendition and arrangement indicate that it was an ideograph rather than an ornamental motif.

What was the meaning of the bispiral symbol?

Joseph Déchelette was of the opinion that the double spiral resulted from a decomposed swastika (Fig. 101: 11, 18). However, the hypothesis based on formal comparison between similar looking signs does not shed much light on their evolution. If a certain object A resembles object B, this does not necessarily imply that A derives from B. Why not B from A? Or both A and B from X? This way of reconstructing the evolution of symbolic signs does not explain what caused these transformations, to say nothing of the logical validity of such a method. It has not been proved (and contradicts historical facts) that such transformations took place at all. If this scheme is correct, each next figure must be younger than the previous one. But this is not the case. For example, the double spiral, which allegedly originated from the swastika, is ten thousand years older than the swastika itself.

Neither is a hypothesis advanced at about the same time by the German author G. Wilke (Fig. 101b) in any way convincing. A certain H. Raphaelian also contributed to the list of such hypotheses (Fig. 101c).

a spiral, as a snake can easily do, it remains to assume that Figure 98: 3 portrays a snake. The graphemes in Figure 98: 4, 5 also designate snakes, for the spiral here is accompanied by strokes imitating the snake-skin texture. This semantics is confirmed by the fact that snakes were venerated in Southeastern Europe during the Neolithic, from which the above examples were cited, and later.

The spiral was the sign of thunder in the ancient Mediterranean and in medieval China; it was a symbol of lightning in Western Asia [756, pp. 61-120]. One cannot but wonder: what has a spiral in common with thunder and lightning? What objective conditions or specific features of human psychology might suggest spiral lines for designating thunder and lightning, especially among different peoples and at different periods of human history? The point is that the spiral was a schematic representation of the snake/dragon, and the dragon was an incarnation of the underworld god, who, by rising into the sky as a fiery serpent/lightning, produced thunderstorms.

The Neolithic object symbolizing the serpent (Fig. 98: 3) is a representation of a seashell. As early as the Paleolithic, seashells were used as amulets and were placed in burials. If some non-utilitarian object accompanies the deceased, it is reasonable to assume that it carried a meaning associated with the realm of the dead. Paleolithic shells are sometimes colored red [756, p. 141], a symbol of the lord of the underworld. Consequently, the earth god in the image of the mythical dragon and the spiral as his symbol were known as early as the Paleolithic.

Ornamental symbolism in Daghestan uses many designs involving spiral-like elements, but strange as it may seem, a simple spiral is relatively rare. In Figure 131: 6, the spiral represents a snake; the spirals in Figure 393: 4 must also represent snakes, for their ends are bent. The spiral in Figure 98: 1 cannot be directly correlated with anything; however, if one takes into account the relationship between Daghestan symbolism and Neolithic prototypes, this must also be a snake.



Fig. 100. Bispiral symbol: 1 — Portugal [858, p. 84] and Ossetia [573, p. 17]; 2 — Australian aborigines [750, pl. 12]; 3 — U.S.A., Colorado, 12th c. [784b, p. 365]; 4 — Ancient Peru [53, p. 149]; 5 — New Zealand [811, p. 77]; 6 — Etruscan, ca 700 BC [692, pl. 22].

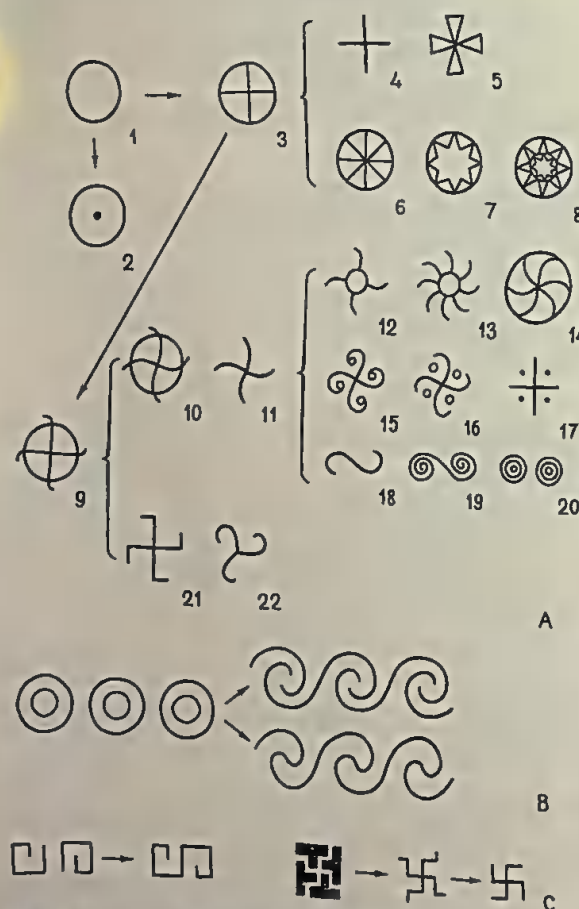


Fig. 101. Hypotheses of graphic transformations: A — J. Déchelette [659b, p. 458; 658a, p. 315]; B — G. Wilke [860, pp. 7, 8]; C — H. Raphaelian [806, pp. 7, 67].

These methods are attractive in their simplicity, they enable one to account for complex phenomena without going to the heart of the matter. For example, B. Goff states in a relatively recent book, without resorting to any argumentation, that the Z sign (seen from many examples as a variant of the S sign) derived from a broken line (i.e., Fig. 102: 7 from Fig. 102: 4) and that that line allegedly resulted from "manipulations with squares" [701, p. 3].

The reality was quite different. In ancient graphic symbolism there were no manipulations which might lead to altering the essential structure of the symbols. Modifications of shape took place within a very narrow range; moreover, they did not go beyond the framework of the content (for example, a wavy line could become a broken one, an S-shaped sign a Z, a semioval a triangle, etc., but this never changed the symbol's meaning).

In the specific examples referred to by Goff (Fig. 102), the semantics of the ornamental motifs can be deciphered like this: 1 — rain clouds; 2 — rain clouds and rain (designated conventionally by wavy lines — the water symbol); 3 — rain clouds and rain (cf. Fig. 10: 9); 4 — rain (wavy lines transformed into broken lines); 5 — rain; 6 — heavenly moisture (designated by zigzags) and rain; 7 — Z shapes and rain.

Here the Z-shaped sign may designate moisture. Sometimes it is present in other contexts in this meaning. For example, Z signs on the figure of the goddess, the mistress of heavenly waters (Fig. 146: 6), may be understood as symbols of moisture. It is also possible that in both these examples the Z sign designated a snake, being a graphic variant of the S. Z-shaped signs in Figure 102: 7 may

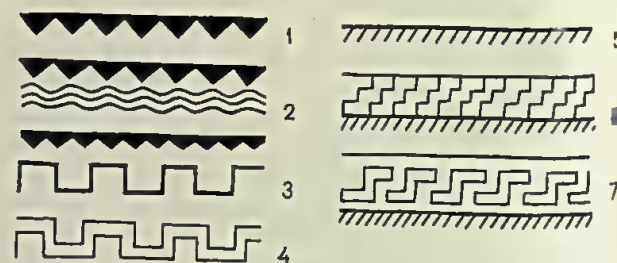


Fig. 102. Designations of heavenly moisture: 1—7 — Hassuna culture (Northern Mesopotamia and Northern Syria, Neolithic) [701, figs. 33-41].

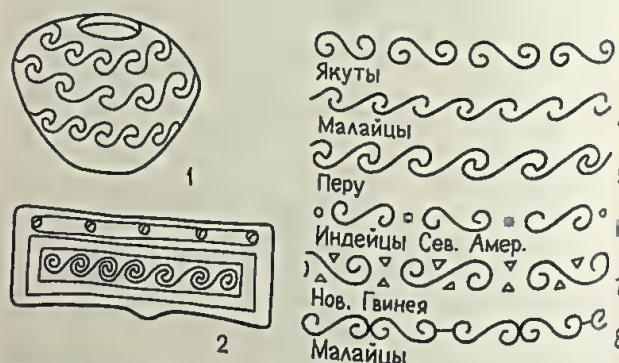


Fig. 103. Chain of bispirals: 1 — Yugoslavia, ca 4000 BC [298, p. 67]; 2 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646c, pl. 8]; 3—8 — ornaments of various peoples of the world [750, pls. 14-33].

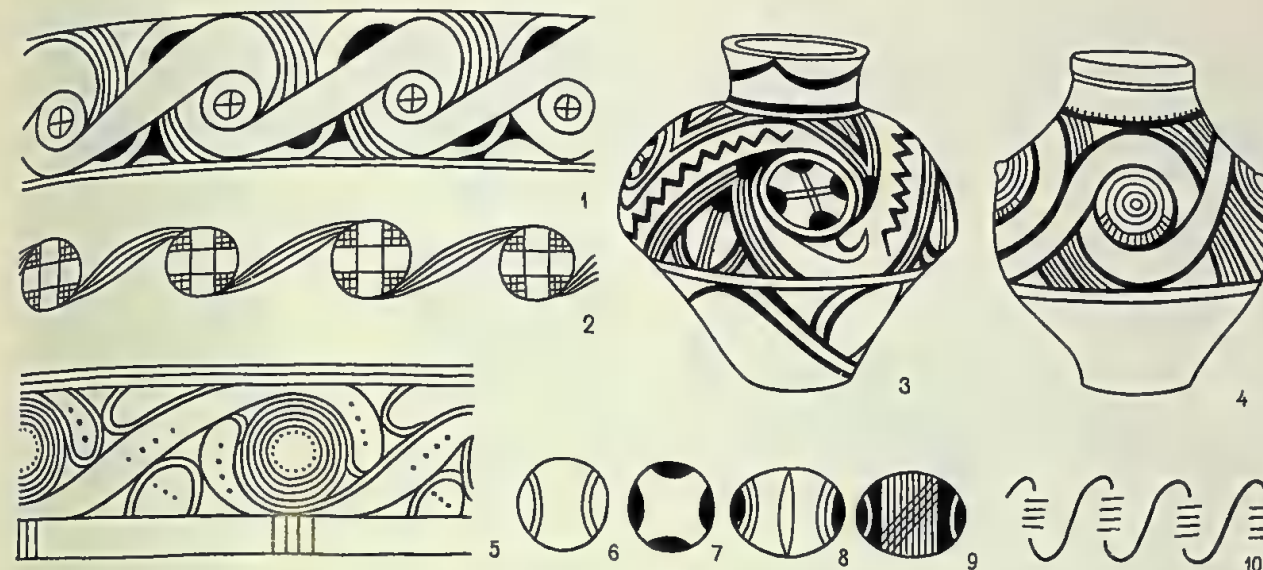


Fig. 104. Ornamental "running wave" motif: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni, 3th millennium BC [468a, p. 42]; 2 — Crete, ca 2000 BC [676a, p. 112]; 3—9 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [744, pl. 64; 468a, p. 35; 696, pp. 95, 100, 103]; 10 — Iran, ca 2500 BC [14, pl. 21].

express the notion that the dragon who rose into the sky produced rain; in Figure 146: 6, snake symbols appear on the goddess' body, as in other cases (Fig. 129).

M. Mammayev, who has studied Daghestan antiquities, does not hesitate to state that "the S-shaped scroll is a symbol of the Tree of Life" [313, p. 109]. This conclusion is based on a single instance which caught Mammayev's eye, where the sign appeared in a context imparting it this meaning (cf. Figs. 181: 1 and 359). But this is the only case, and it is from the late Middle Ages, by which time the semantics of ancient symbols had been forgotten. A great many other uses of the S-shaped sign do not corroborate such an interpretation.

The bispiral symbol, when it is being employed as an ornamental motif, does not usually occur alone, but as a series of multiple links (Fig. 103: 3-8). In most cases the bispirals are consecutively connected and form a continuous band referred to as "a running wave" (Fig. 103: 1, 2).

B. Rybakov [468a], who analyzed ornamental motifs on pottery of the Tripolye-Cututeni culture, came to the

conclusion that the chain of S-shaped figures symbolized the sun's diurnal rotation (Fig. 104: 1) or, alternatively, the uninterrupted course of time, expressed allegorically in terms of snakes creeping back and forth (Fig. 104: 5). This approach to the design raises quite a few doubts.

1) Why should the same element in similar designs designate the movement of the sun in some cases and creeping snakes in others?

2) Why should the path of the sun follow an S-shaped line, while its visually perceived trajectory across the sky is an arc? If one takes into account the ancient notion of the sun moving at night from west to east under the earth, the diurnal cycle of the sun's movement would have been described as a circle or an oval.

3) If the S figure represented a trajectory, it would have been drawn as a line, whereas it appears on the Tripolye pottery as a variable-width band.

Fig. 105. Series of S-shaped figures: 1 — ceramic vessel, 19th c., Daghestan; 2 — Ancient Peru [632, pl. 117]; 3 — Central Asia, 10th c. [164, p. 91]; 4 — Greece, Neolithic [518, pl. 14]; 5, 6 — Germany, ca 3000 BC [381a, p. 297]; 7 — knitted pattern, ca 1900, Daghestan; 8 — Western Siberia, Bronze Age [258, p. 131]; 9 — embroidery, ca 1900, Daghestan; 10 — Ancient Crete [676c, p. 243]; 11 — Yugoslavia, ca 3000 BC [298, p. 67].

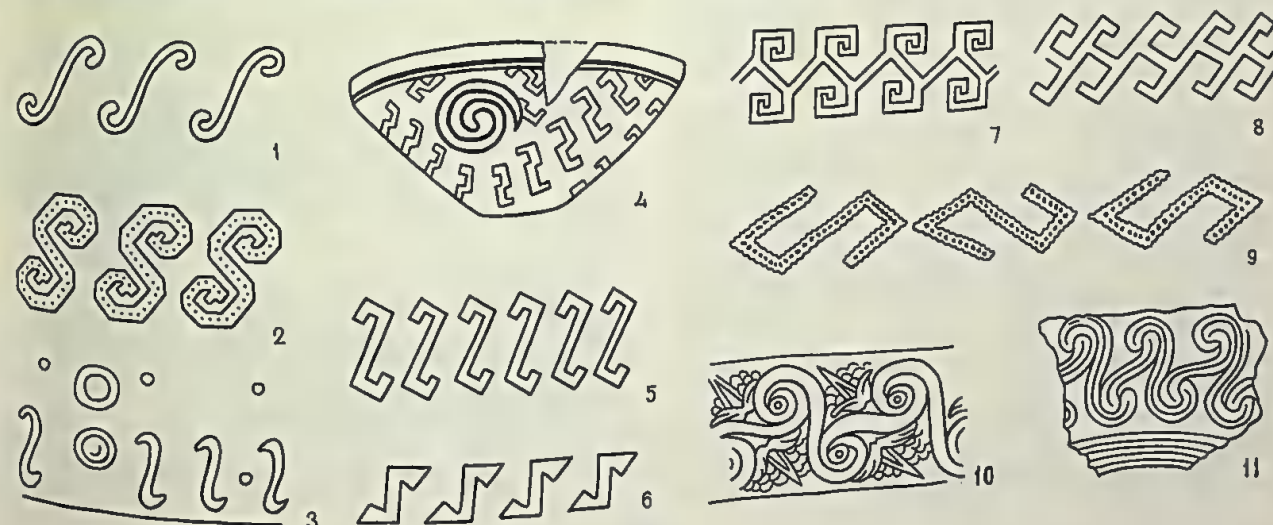




Fig. 106. S-shaped sign and "running wave" on pottery of 4000–1000 BC: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [381a, p. 244]; 2 — Germany [719, p. 295]; 3 — Yugoslavia [759, p. 281]; 4 — Denmark [699, p. 115]; 5 — Italy [830, p. 115]; 6, 7 — Southern Urals [270, p. 98].

4) Does the disk in these designs, in combination with the S figure, really designate the sun? The disk with a cross (Fig. 104: 1, 3) had a different meaning in the symbolism of early farmers. The disk with concentric circles, was shown above, designated a cloud and was a heaven symbol in the Neolithic and Aeneolithic; the dots inside it (Fig. 104: 5) symbolized areas under grain crops whose fate was dependent on the heaven goddess' will, and the abutting dashes (Fig. 104: 4) marked rain bestowed by the goddess. The disk in combination with the S element could contain details in the form of two or four inscribed segments (Fig. 104: 6, 7). Such diagrams on the Tripolye pottery often exhibited an oval instead of a disk; the oval is unlikely to have symbolized the sun (Fig. 104: 8, 9). The S-shaped figure sometimes occurred in combination with the sign of water (Fig. 104: 10).

5) In ancient and more recent folk ornament the bispirals, or the identical Z signs, are not infrequently arranged as a disconnected sequence, and they may be vertical or slanting, as well as horizontal (Fig. 105: 1–8). They may also be connected without forming the "running wave" (Fig. 105: 7, 8). S-shaped links in the chain may occur at dissimilar angles, which conflicts with the idea of a regular day-by-day sequence (Fig. 105: 10, 11); they may also turn in opposite directions (Fig. 105: 9).

Finally, if the above hypothesis accounts for the origin of the "running wave" motif, it remains unclear what the S symbol was supposed to designate when it appeared singly or in pairs.

S-shaped figures on Western European Neolithic pottery,

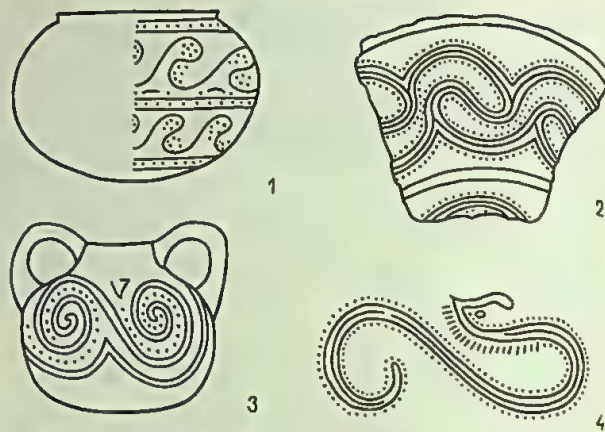


Fig. 107. S-shaped sign and "running wave" representation of snakes: 1 — England, Bronze Age [381b, p. 237]; 2, 4 — Sweden, Bronze Age [771, pp. 121, 114]; 3 — Rumania, Neolithic [775, p. 81].

including that of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture, appear singly or in groups and under different aspects and combinations (Fig. 106: 1, 4); besides, the "running wave" often looks like an undulating ribbon — hardly a sun cycle or a time course (Fig. 106: 3, 5). Such drawings with dots representing snake-skin spots (Fig. 107: 1, 2) definitely symbolized snakes (cf. Fig. 355: 1, 5). Isolated S figures are also encountered which portray snakes (Fig. 107: 3, 4).

In medieval England, a decorative metal detail in the form of the letter S was attached to walls of buildings; it was a talisman, an amulet against evil [790, p. 303]. This is apparently a depiction of a serpent, the patron of dwellings, who was occasionally represented by a zigzag or a snake (Fig. 127).

If it is assumed that the S-shaped figure represented the snake in the Neolithic, its combination with the symbols for heaven (Fig. 104: 4, 5), rain (Fig. 104: 10), and the universe (Fig. 104: 1, 3 — "the four directions," Fig. 104: 8, 9 — "the split egg") becomes understandable, because the mythical dragon was regarded as the heaven goddess's partner; these two major deities of the Neolithic religion were venerated as the world's progenitors.

Snakes, which were objects of religious worship, are represented in Western European Neolithic art as variously wriggling and interlacing ribbons (Fig. 108). One of the



Fig. 108. Stylized representations of snakes, Neolithic Europe: 1, 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [699, p. 104]; 3 — Ireland [659a, p. 611]; 4 — Yugoslavia [696, p. 219].

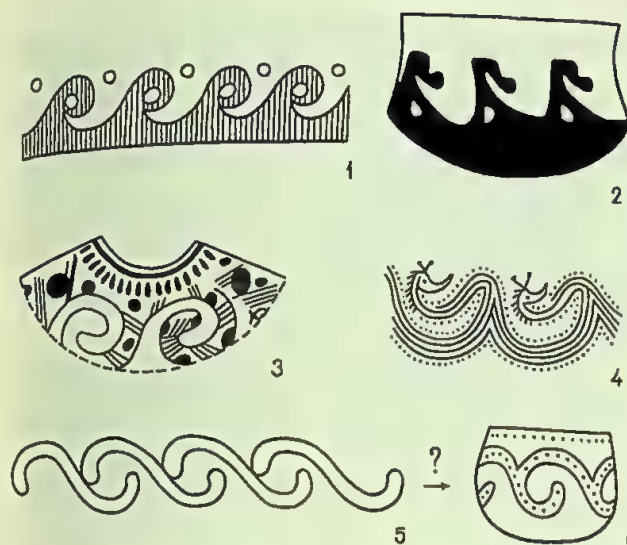


Fig. 109. Ornamental "heaving wave" motif: 1 — Carpathian Ukraine, ca 1900 [470, p. 59]; 2 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, p. 297]; 3 — Tripolye-Cucuteni, ca 3000 BC [696, p. 102]; 4 — Sweden, ca 1500 BC [771, p. 77]; 5 — hypothetical version of the pattern; 6 — Germany, ca 4000 BC [659a, p. 548].



Fig. 110. S-shaped symbol with adjuncts: 1 — Chechenia, ca 1700 [797, p. 52]; 2 — Ancient Greece [618d, p. 52]; 3 — Ireland, ca 3000 BC [810, p. 40].

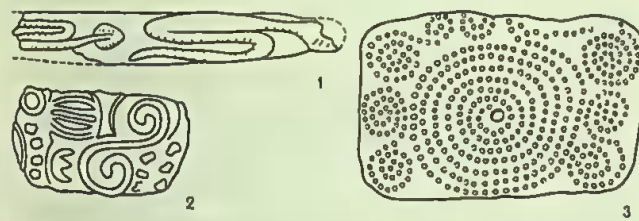


Fig. 111. Paleolithic S-shaped graphemes: 1 — Spain [753, p. 134]; 2 — France [659a, p. 230]; 3 — Siberia [111, pl. 11].

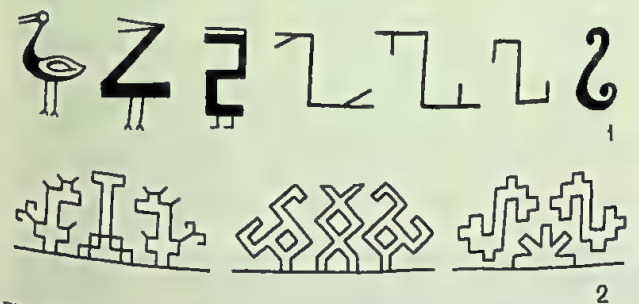


Fig. 112. Origin of S-shaped sign from bird representation: 1 — according to A. Bobrinskoy [71, pl. 2]; 2 — embroidery elements, Volga region [203, p. 98].

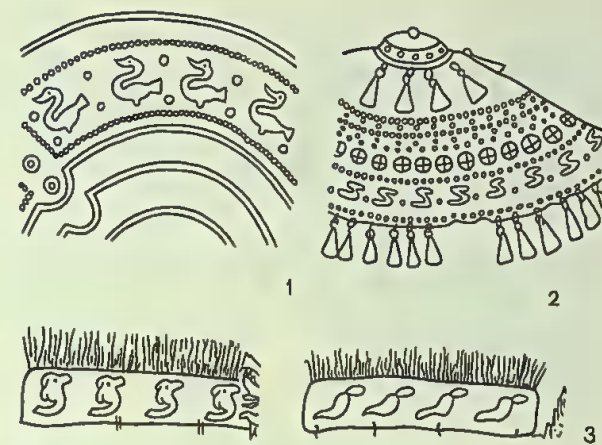


Fig. 113. Transformation of bird representation into S-shaped sign: 1 — Sweden, Bronze Age [646a, p. 77]; 2 — Austria, Bronze Age [646a, p. 76]; 3 — Altai, ca 300 BC [708, pl. 12].

versions is in the form of a "splashing wave" (Fig. 109: 1, 3, 4, 6). This latter variation on the snake theme looks somewhat strange. Perhaps it evolved from older stylized portrayals of waterfowl (Fig. 109: 2) on the pottery of Asia Minor; perhaps it issued from some other design (Fig. 109: 5). A possibility is that it conveyed some special meaning.

The bispiral sign is sometimes accompanied by a pair of appendages on both sides (Fig. 110). This design recurs in different countries and over different periods, which rules out chance. In some cases the appendages are signs of plants (Fig. 110: 1, 2), in others of water-washed soil (Fig. 110: 3). The semantics of these designs is not properly understood.

Snakes, including S-shaped ones, were portrayed as far back as the Paleolithic (Fig. 111: 1). Yet, although the S sign symbolized the snake in the Neolithic and probably in the Paleolithic (Fig. 111: 2, 3),¹²² it had a different meaning in Bronze Age cult symbolism.

A. Brobinskoy, developing K. Steinen's hypothesis [839, p. 265], contended that the S or Z figure was a schematic bird representation (Fig. 112: 1). Numerous stylized bird portrayals support this point of view (Fig. 112: 2). It is of interest that the oldest pictographic writing of the Sumerians, i.e., in pre-Indo-European times, had the Z sign for "bird." Many ancient designs exhibit successions of waterfowl and related chains of S or Z signs (Figs. 113, 114).

The fact that these signs originated from stylized bird representations is confirmed by some of their features. For example, in most ancient designs of the kind one of the spirals of the S figure is larger than the other, suggesting that the lesser curve is the bird's head and the bigger its body. The two spirals are sometimes linked by a broken line rather than by a smooth transition (Fig. 115), which may also bear witness to the origin of the sign from the bird figure, in this case standing, rather than swimming.

Certain representations can be regarded as prototypes of the S-shaped symbol preserving rudiments of the bird

¹²²The S-shaped sign shown in Figure 111: 2, 3 may not necessarily designate 'snake.' It could have had a different meaning in the Paleolithic (see chapter "Tracks and Traps").

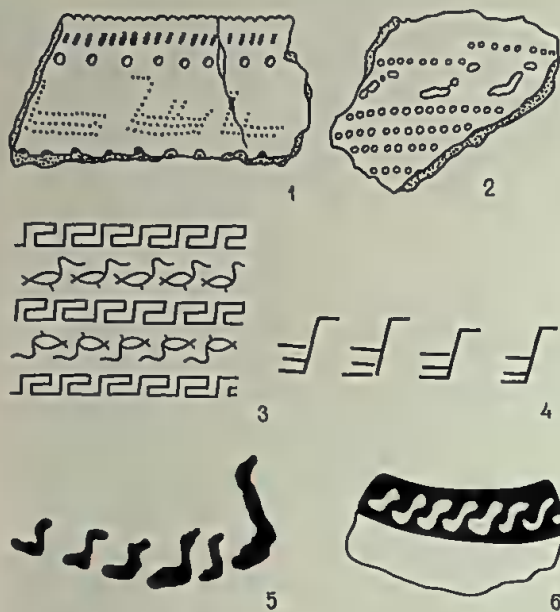


Fig. 114. Transformation of bird representation into S-shaped sign: 1 — Karelia, Neolithic [399, p. 47]; 2 — Urals, Late Bronze Age [33a, p. 110]; 3 — Yugoslavia, Bronze Age [719, p. 467]; 4 — Transural region, Neolithic [449, fig. 2]; 5 — Karelia, Aeneolithic [443, pl. 10]; 6 — Crete, Aeneolithic [676a, p. 113].



Fig. 115. Bispiral with a break: 1 — Daghestan, medieval pottery design; 2 — Chechenia, sign on stone masonry [797, p. 53].

figure. The S sign may have two limbs (Fig. 116: 1-5). S-shaped figures are encountered with strokes which suggest bird feathers (Fig. 116: 7). Such figures are sometimes furnished with rudimentary elements of wings or a beak (Fig. 116: 6, 9).

In some ancient (Neolithic) representations S or Z signs occur above figures of people, animals, or mountains, symbolizing birds in the sky (Fig. 117). These compositions, traveling from people to people over the vast territory from Egypt to Turkmenia, could not have been genre paintings or landscapes, because they involved the same limited number of elements — horned animals and birds. The former symbolized earth (in Figure 117: 3, they are supplemented with triangles, earth signs in this case, and in Figure 117: 2 with a zigzag designating water for irrigation), while birds symbolized the sky (in Figure 117: 3 there is also a rain cloud sign). These designs express the central idea of the religion of the earliest farmers: the relationship between the heaven goddess and the earth god.¹²³

¹²³ This is also the subject of a picture on a Tripolye-Cucuteni vessel (Fig. 9: 4), where the lower universe is represented by dogs and a deer, and by a conventional designation of tilled soil, whereas the upper universe is represented by rain clouds (B. Rybakov's interpretation of the picture is: "Animals in spring rain," or "Dogs guarding heavenly crops" [480b, p. 27]).

The analysis of paradigms of the Neolithic S-shaped sign, taking into account the geographical distribution of the specimens, shows that the sign stood for 'snake' in Southeastern Europe of that period and for 'bird' in Western Asia. It must be admitted, though, that there seem to be exceptions to this rule (for example, Figure 104: 10, assuming that this particular example belongs to the Neolithic). During the Bronze Age, as veneration of the earth god, characteristic of the Neolithic, was replaced by veneration of the sun god, the snake meaning of the S sign gave way to its interpretation as a bird.

The bird figure is a favorite motif in the decorative art of past epochs. Bird-shaped amulets are listed in inventories of objects found in burial sites of various archeological cultures, from the Paleolithic to the Middle Ages.

Animal figures fashioned from nature prevail in the Upper Paleolithic cave paintings of France and Spain. Yet schematic drawings are also typical of that distant art. A bird on a pole (Fig. 378: 2) stands out among them. This seems to be a sacred symbol in the form of a bird figure attached to a staff. A once common decoration of buildings in the form of a bird on a spire (and the fabled "golden cockerel") is obviously a magic symbol [465, p. 82] going back, as can be seen, to the Early Stone Age.¹²⁴

Written evidence and ethnographic data show that birds were venerated in ancient times. Eastern European folklore has myths about the creation of the world by a bird [399, p. 49; 471, p. 402]. In Ancient Greece, the killing of a stork was punishable as homicide. In Ancient Egypt, capital punishment awaited anyone guilty of killing an ibis, even without premeditation. The pigeon was held sacred in Europe and in the Caucasus, the swan in Russia, and the stork in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia. The stork is called "the brother of spring" in Armenia [231, p. 23]. In Daghestan, tiny niches were left in the exterior walls of mosques to accommodate birds.

Bird images are extremely widespread in the archeological materials of both the Neolithic and Bronze periods, bearing witness to bird veneration in both the religious systems compared in this book.

There are different reasons for revering birds. The main one is undoubtedly the fact that the bird's habitat is the sky, so that it is close to the deity residing there. An archaic statuette of Jupiter shown in Figure 118:1 is of interest. The god holds a wheel, a Neolithic heaven symbol, in one hand and a plait, a water symbol, in the other (see Fig. 136); he inherited these emblems from the dethroned Great Goddess.¹²⁵ A bundle of bispirals hangs from his shoulder; these are apparently birds, which belong in the sphere of the heavenly god and became his attribute.

Waterfowl heralded spring in the cold north, while in the hot south they symbolized blessed water. V. Gorodtsov, an archeologist who studied ancient images, came to the conclusion that the bird figures abounding in the remains

¹²⁴ Radiocarbon analysis of charred fragments from this cave showed their age as ranging between 15 and 16 thousand years. The paintings are believed to have been carried out 17 to 9 thousand years ago [5, p. 80].

¹²⁵ But this plait consists of wavy lines, and the wave, as will be shown below, could also designate lightning.



Fig. 116. Stylized representations of birds: 1, 2 — Daghestan, incised stones, Dusrakh; 3 — Georgia, 6th c.; 4 — element of carpet ornament, Southern Caucasus [777, p. 189]; 5 — Denmark, Bronze Age [839, p. 282]; 6-8 — Iran, Neolithic [97, pp. 57, 36, 34]; 9 — Italy, Bronze Age [716, p. 258].



Fig. 117. Conventional pictures on "heaven and earth" theme: 1 — Middle Asia [343, p. 156]; 2 — Elam [858, p. 84]; 3 — Egypt [237, pl. 2]; 4 — Caucasian Albania, ca 100 CE [455, p. 232].

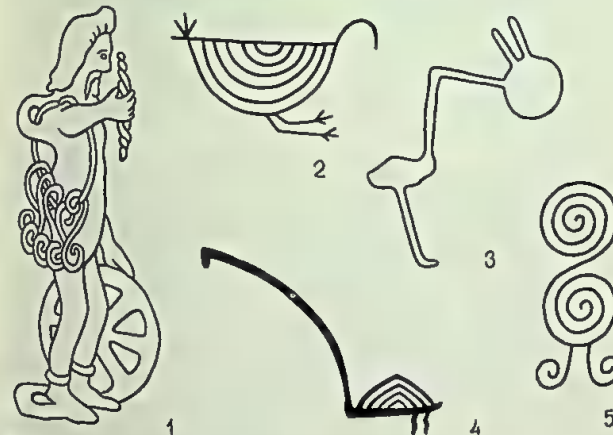


Fig. 118. Combination of deity and bird: 1 — archaic Roman statuette of Jupiter [658b, p. 119]; 2 — Italy, Neolithic [620, p. 31]; 3, 4 — Karelia, Aeneolithic [290a, p. 188; 443, pl. 2]; 5 — design on a stone, Daghestan, Tidib [376, p. 230].



of ancient cultures signified the spring sun and the "related concepts of happiness, well-being, and joy" [120, p. 9]. The scholarly value of this judgement, which may in some respects be true, is reduced by the implied idealization of ancient spiritual life. Besides, it reconstructs the sensations of people in the temperate climatic zone, whereas the cult and mythological attitudes of European paganism are intimately connected with the heritage of the Western Asian Neolithic.

K. Steinen and A. Bobrinskoy believed that birds were held sacred because many localities teemed with snakes in ancient times, and birds, storks in particular, destroyed snakes. But if this is so, it is not a matter of reptile extermination as such, but the fact that the snake, venerated by Neolithic farmers, was later regarded as representing a hostile deity.

In post-Neolithic cult attitudes, birds whose image was previously associated with the concept of the heavenly deity, were perceived as pertaining to the deified sun. The legendary immortal bird Phoenix became an allegorical image of the sun during the period of Classical Antiquity. The swan is a solar symbol in the Rig-Veda [778b, p. 515]. The bird in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing is often equivalent to the heavenly body [296, p. 223]. The Hallstatt culture abounds in bird figures combined with a disk or a wheel [812, p. 58-60] which at that time, i.e., at the beginning of the first millennium B.C., must have symbolized the sun.

Identification of the bird with the sun seems to have been encouraged by misunderstood Neolithic symbolism. Ancient pictures on rocks in Karelia include designs that can be wrongly interpreted as combinations of a bird and the solar symbol (in Figure 118: 3 an apparent sign of the sun with two beams; in Figure 118: 2, 4 an apparent sign of the rising or setting sun). However, these rock wall designs date from the Neolithic, and therefore the drawings symbolize association of the bird with the sky (the disk with two extensions will be shown to be a heaven sign, and concentric semiovals were also shown to be a heaven sign).

In conclusion, the bispiral could designate either a snake or a sun-bird, depending on the context. In a similar way, the characters B, C, H, P, X read differently depending on

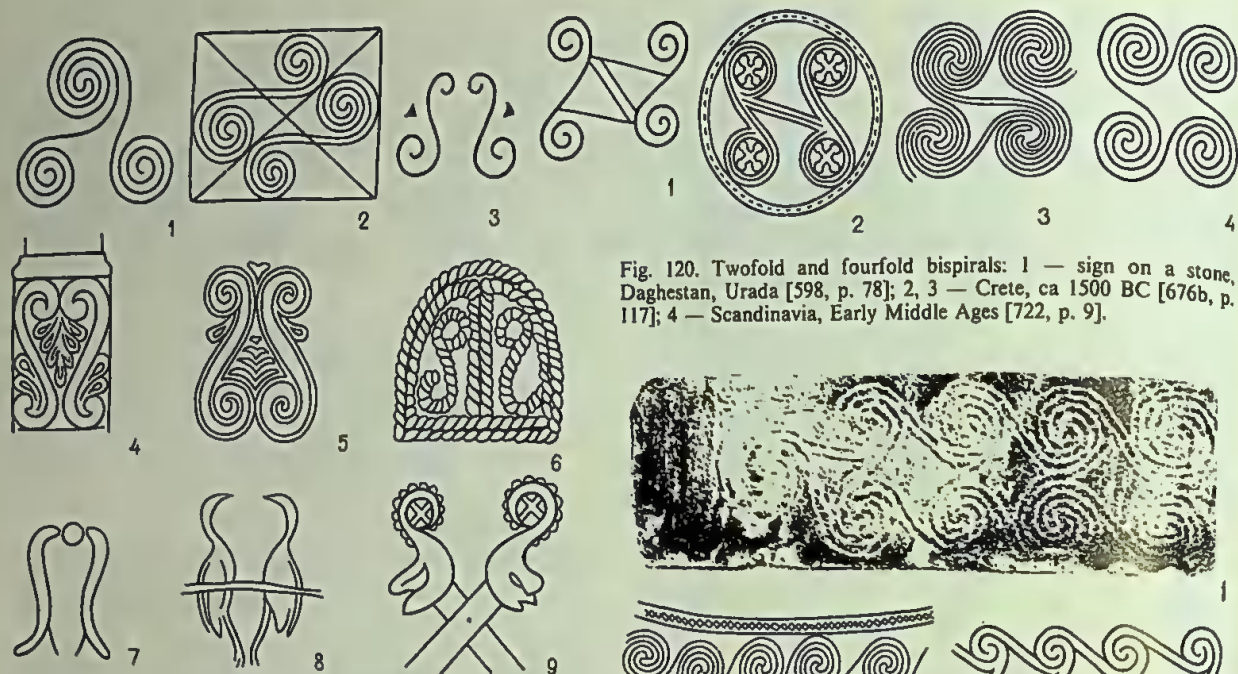


Fig. 119. Pair of S-shaped symbols and its origin: 1—3 — Daghestan, designs on stones in Urada [598, p. 78], Itsari (12th c. tower), and Kishisha (17th c. tower); 4 — Georgia, 19th c. [109, pl. 182]; 5 — Etruscan, ca 600 BC [618b, pl. 52]; 6 — Russia, 13th c. [33d, p. 91]; 7 — Georgia, Middle Ages [304, p. 157]; 8 — Armenia, ca 1000 BC [423, p. 9]; 9 — Germany, 19th c. [503b, p. 20].

the alphabet they occur in, Russian or Latin.

In Daghestan, engravings on stones set in walls include designs of a pair of S signs in different combinations, among them symmetrically opposing ones (Fig. 119: 1-3). This composition was known there as early as the Bronze Age [322, p. 103]. A diagram in the form of a symmetrical pair of bispirls is encountered both in ancient and in 19th and early 20th century folk ornamentation in various regions of Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus (Fig. 119: 4-9). In the Caucasus, the symbol can be observed on objects ranging in age from the Aeneolithic [281, p. 63] through the first millennium B.C. [338, p. 89, 93], to the Middle Ages, and even to the nineteenth century (Fig. 119: 4). In many cases a pair of bispirls is a schematic way of representing a pair of birds. Figure 119: 9 shows that a pair of S signs is a pair of birds and that these birds represented the sun, as indicated by the typical post-Neolithic solar symbol — a cross within a circle.

The archeologist G. Kapantsian, who has published one such representation of a pair of birds, considers it a symbol of fertility, of propagation [231, p. 23]. This opinion is not supported by argumentation. In deciphering ancient cult symbols, one should avoid being carried away by personal impressions, especially those based on one design only.

Combinations of two S figures may have a form other than symmetrical mirror composition. In a number of cases the connection between the two figures is expressed in some other way (Fig. 120: 1, 2). It may be interesting to compare these two examples, one from late medieval Daghestan and the other from the Eastern Mediterranean, second millen-



Fig. 120. Twofold and fourfold bispirls: 1 — sign on a stone, Daghestan, Urada [598, p. 78]; 2, 3 — Crete, ca 1500 BC [676b, p. 117]; 4 — Scandinavia, Early Middle Ages [722, p. 9].

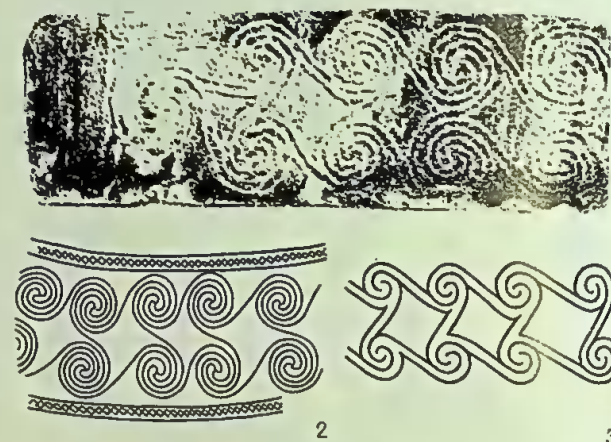


Fig. 121. Series of fourfold bispirls: 1 — Daghestan, incised stone in Dusrakh; 2 — Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [276, p. 51]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 473].

nium B.C.: the same idea is evidently expressed in both cases, and the similarity between the graphic expressions of this idea cannot be accounted for by a chance coincidence of artistic imagination.

It is worth noting that the theme of paired bispirls figures in ancient Cretan symbolism. Consequently, it originally represented a connection between two snakes rather than two birds. Pairs of snakes are very common in ancient art. In particular, the pottery of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture exhibits graphemes consisting of two spirals, one inscribed into the other, each with a bulge at the end, apparently designating the snake head [667, pp. 29, 30].

It follows from data which will be referred to later that two snakes personified divine twins, the sons of the Great Goddess. The twins were represented as snakes because their father, the underworld god, was a serpent. However, they could also be represented as birds, for their mother, the heaven goddess, was a bird.

The paired bispirl design underlay the ornamental motif of quadrupled bispirls (Fig. 120: 3, 4). Like the "running wave" ornamental motif resulting from a sequential arrangement of bispirls, the quadrupled bispirls also formed ribbon-like ornamental design (Fig. 121). Such an ornament was common in the second millennium B.C. in the Eastern Mediterranean, in the part of Western Asia adjacent to the Southern Caucasus, and in the Caucasus (Georgia, North Ossetia). In Daghestan, no ancient monuments bearing such an ornament are known, but it is present in medieval architectural decoration. This

applies also to the other Daghestan symbols analyzed in this book. Nearly all the Daghestan examples date back to no earlier than the 12th century, which cannot be dated with certainty.¹²⁶ There is virtually no evidence of a concrete historical correlation between examples of Daghestan symbols made in the 12th—19th centuries and older counterparts in the Caucasus, Western Asia, and

Europe. This circumstance remains an enigma in the ancestry of archaic elements in the ornaments of mountainous Daghestan.

¹²⁶V.M. Kotovich dates the rock wall paintings of Daghestan in the fourth and third millennia B.C. [256]. A. Formozov, however, remarks: "Judging by the representations of riders, the rock wall designs in highland Daghestan, Circassia, and Kabarda date from the Iron Age" [551, p. 24].

Snake-Water

The zigzag is a decorative motif frequently found on Daghestan buildings (Fig. 122). It is a common ornament among different peoples and at different times, and is among the oldest of graphemes, known as far back as



Fig. 122. Zigzag in Daghestan ornamentation: 1 — figured masonry, Go'or; 2 — carving on a door lintel, Khushkada; 3 — carved stones in wall masonry, Tsurayi.

the Paleolithic. This design is exceptionally simple; it is therefore impossible to state a priori that its repeated presence is solely the result of historic continuity and of borrowings, or that it had the same semantics at all times and in all cases. However, in Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia, from the Neolithic until modern times, certain facts indicate that the zigzag is a graphic symbol had a specific meaning: it designated snake or water. Judging by numerous examples, the zigzag and the wavy line were semantically equivalent; this is a case of the same sign rendered in different handwritings — angular or rounded.

The Egyptian hieroglyph in the form of a wavy line was an ideograph of the notion 'water' (Fig. 123: 9). One might simply assume that this sign of water originated as a representation of waves. But it only seems so, because such stylization of waves is now common. The wavy line as a symbol of water had a different origin. Water was

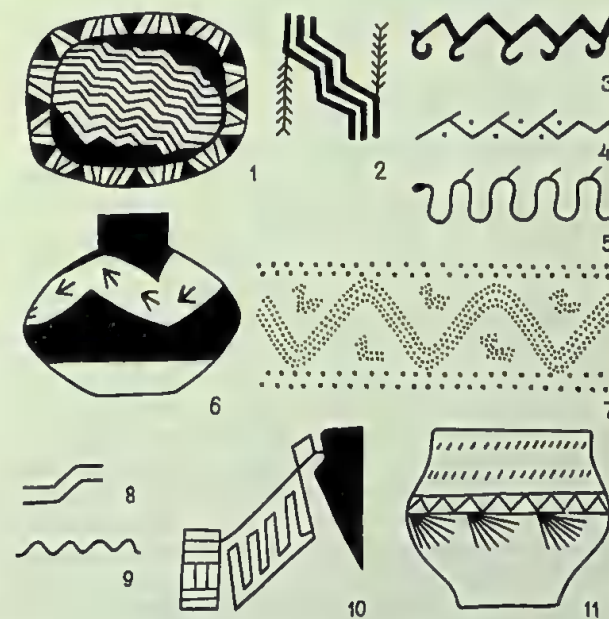


Fig. 123. Zigzag or wave as conventional representation of water: 1, 3, 4 — Asia Minor, 6000—4000 BC [764b, pp. 409, 423, 317]; 2 — Iran, Neolithic [716, p. 45]; 5 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [839, p. 254]; 6 — Ancient Egypt; 7 — Northern Russia, Neolithic [418, p. 153]; 8, 9 — Sumerian and Egyptian hieroglyphs of water; 10 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, pl. 5]; 11 — Central Asia, ca 1000 BC [499, p. 225].

designated by two parallel zigzags in the oldest Sumerian pictographic writing (Fig. 123: 8). The same sign was a hieroglyph for 'river.' E. Herzfeld concluded from more complete Sumerian designs that the wavy or zigzag line symbolized water because it portrayed the river in plan [716, p. 43]. Other evidence confirms this. A Neolithic design from Asia Minor shows a zigzag band with three-pointed signs (Fig. 123: 6), evidently representing a river with waterfowl (this manner of artistic representation is not surprising: ancient art often employs the method of narration rather than illustration). The same motif of a river and waterfowl is encountered in Neolithic materials from Northern Russia (Fig. 123: 7).

Zigzags or waves often decorate the top portion of Neolithic and Bronze Age vessels in Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia. Some learned publications have expressed the opinion that such an ornament at the neck of the vessel marked the level of the liquid to be poured into it, a way of expressing a wish to have the vessel always full. This is a typically subjective approach. In many cases the zigzag or wave at the top of a vessel occur in combination with a ring of semiovals or triangles, which symbolize rain clouds; such a combination was characteristic of the earliest period of formation of Neolithic symbols (Fig. 11: 2-5). It follows that the zigzag/wave around the top of the vessel was a conventional representation of heavenly moisture expected to pour down as rain.

Symbolic designs in the form of zigzags or wavy lines with adjacent designations of plants (Figs. 123: 2, 3, 11; 129: 4), in the process of simplification became diagrams which cannot be correctly deciphered if their initial forms are not taken into account. K. Steinen, for example, understood the zigzag with protrusions (Fig. 123: 4) as a portrayal of a feathered dragon, while in Ancient Egypt, a design of a snake with rather odd protrusions (Fig. 123: 5) was interpreted as representing the serpent Apop knifed by the god Ra.

The wave or zigzag sign which emerged in the Neolithic as a schematic representation of a river, acquired the significance of a water symbol in general. That is why designs of zigzags with abutting protrusions should not be perceived as designating a river with plants growing along its banks. Plants on river banks are of no interest to the ancient (or contemporary) farmer. His concern is elsewhere, to have enough water for his cultivations. The designs in question should be understood in this particular light.

Since, then, in ancient times the wavy line symbolized the meandering of rivers and streams, rather than sea waves, it becomes possible to decipher a schematic design found in Çatal-Hüyük, supposing that the broken line there designated irrigation canals or ditches (Fig. 123: 10). The shaded figure seems to designate an elevated location with a flowing spring. The quadrangle next to it must be a reservoir, a pond in the vicinity of the spring, and the larger quadrangle with lines across it would be a field with irrigation ditches.

The sequence of parallel zigzags is a multiple, repeated representation of the symbol; it is difficult to suggest any alternative interpretation of this design. Or else, it could have been absorbed by Neolithic symbolism from the Pale-

olithic and Mesolithic.¹²⁷ The compositions in Figure 123: 1, 2 do not represent a river, but mean "water" in general. That is why rain was portrayed in such a strange way: bunches of zigzags or wavy lines (Fig. 5). These are not figurative designs, for neither river nor rain look like this. In all these pictures, river, rain, and irrigation ditch are not visually perceptible images, but are designated conventionally by the symbol of water.

Water was always a highly esteemed natural element, of first-rate, vital importance for agriculture in arid regions. One might conclude that therefore the earliest farmers of Western Asia and Southeastern Europe revered it. However, there is no full correlation between climatic conditions and water veneration. For example, water was not held sacred in Ancient Egypt; on the contrary, the attitude to elemental water was there a negative one in the system of cult and mythological values [347, p. 36]. On the other hand, the zigzag and wavy-line ornament is typical of the Neolithic not only in Western Asia and Southeastern Europe, but also in Northern Europe, where farmers were unlikely to depend on the whims of the "rain mistress." Water veneration in these localities may be accounted for by influence from the south. There is evidence, however, that water was venerated in these areas even before agriculture developed.

As already mentioned, deer were sacrificed to water during the Mesolithic. It has been observed that ancient cemeteries in the Southern Caucasus were situated next to a river [355, p. 21], and the Kets in Siberia believed that the deceased should be buried near a river [153, p. 103]. This custom can be understood as a survival of the notion that the dead belonged to the water-dwelling deity who had chosen him a victim. Some peoples (in the Far East and Africa among others) still maintain a superstition forbidding the rescue of a drowning person, for the action might imply stealing a victim from the deity present in the water. Rock wall images in Northern Europe, Asia, and America, made by Mesolithic hunting tribes, are often found on coastal cliffs, frequently at about water level [760, p. 138]. This would indicate that the art of rock wall painting was in these instances a cult practice designed to venerate the water-dwelling deity, and probably also that cult rites were performed in the vicinity of water.

There are vessels and bowls among the artifacts of ancient cultures, whose forms do not suggest that they were meant to serve as household utensils. They are covered with symbols, are not infrequently richly ornamented, and sometimes made of gold. These are ritual vessels; they were intended for ritual observances specified by the religious attitude towards water. In particular, cult rites existed involving the ritual drinking of water; this practice had the significance of holy communion [747, p. 45]. The current expression "to drain one's cup to the dregs" goes back to this type of ancient ritual and related beliefs. The Christian notion of "holy water" or "water of life," borrowed from

¹²⁷ There is a drawing of parallel waves among Mesolithic paintings in Spain. The Le Mas d'Azil Mesolithic complex includes a similar drawing with parallel zigzags [760, pp. 124, 127]; it seems that these signs were inherited from the Franco-Cantabrian Paleolithic. During the Paleolithic their semantics was different, not pertaining to water (see chapter "Tracks and Traps").

Judaism, records memories of the period when water was looked upon as a sacred element. Water was once also considered a source of health; popular healing with water is related to this. The abundant drinking prescribed in yoga is undoubtedly connected with this belief. Water was considered a source of strength; an ancient Indian text reads: "Strength is the essence of water" [756, p. 70]. Moreover, water was believed to be the source of life; myths of many peoples have it that "in the beginning there was water."

The significance attached to water by the ancients was obviously based not only on the fact that it ensured rich crops. What was the meaning, originally, of the custom of washing the deceased with water? The desire to wash off his sins, so that he might be pure when appearing before God in the next world? But ablutions are also performed by the living after the funeral. Ritual washing after the funeral was practised by the ancient Romans, by Jews, African Blacks, North American Indians, and nowhere was it given the meaning of purification. The ablution of the deceased and of those who bury him should be regarded as a religious service dedicated to a deity personified by water. The ancient Greeks washed a person with water after his recovery from illness; this may be seen as a thanksgiving rite.

When a child was born, it was considered essential to provide it with protection or at least with goodwill on the part of the deity; hence the custom of immersing the newborn in water, which existed, for example, in Ancient Rome and in places remote from Europe, such as New Zealand, pre-Columbian America, Equatorial Africa, Japan, and China [514, pp. 511-514]. The pagan notion that ablution amounts to communion with the deity was adopted by monotheistic religions: the Hebrews had a ritual of immersing converts to Judaism; subsequently, those received into a Christian community underwent baptism, i.e., a sacrament marked by the ritual use of water.

Ritual ablutions are essential in Judaism. There is no doubt that their meaning is spiritual rather than hygienic. One is supposed to wash before going to the ritual basin. The hands are washed with soap before the ablution ceremony. The ablution must not be performed in the bathroom.

Early Christians performed lavabo before entering the church; this custom has been partially maintained by Roman Catholics who, on entering the church, dip their fingers in a vessel placed at the entrance. Muslims perform the ablution before prayer; Hindus practise daily ablutions. Public water reservoirs for ablution existed in India in pre-Aryan times; they are still in existence there. The ancient Romans' preoccupation with bathing must also have been of cult origin. The following ordeal, performed, in particular, by the Inquisition, originated from the ancient belief that water was a sacred element: a suspected criminal was thrown into water, and if he drowned, this was considered proof of his innocence, since the water "received" him; this custom existed in both Western Europe and in India, testifying to its very ancient origin [514, p. 83]. In Russia and the Ukraine, those suspected of communion with the "evil spirit" were subjected to a water test as late

as the nineteenth century [40c, p. 510; 511, p. 20]. On the remote South Arabian island of Socotra, the local inhabitants still believe in witches, and suspected sorceresses are subjected to a test of immersion in water with a stone around the neck.

The ethnographer V. Kharuzina thought that "the belief in the purifying powers of water must be based on its property to wash off, remove, carry away physical objects. In carrying away, washing off visible objects, it may, in the popular view, carry away the invisible as well" [566, p. 339]. However, this interpretation of the belief seems far-fetched. Nor could the corresponding conception emerge from hygienic considerations, as such preoccupations did not exist in ancient times. For example, instead of washing dishes, they were given to domestic animals to lick clean. It was not customary to bathe; the glorious Louises of France were handed a wet towel in the morning to rub their eyes, while common people regarded this procedure as unnecessary. Moreover, the negative attitude towards water combined with deference led to the notion that it was undesirable to wash; for example, Michelangelo's father, in one of his letters to his son, strongly recommended that he avoid bathing.

"The Parsees who are preoccupied with ritual ablutions in their religious practices, die because of poor hygienic conditions in their everyday life" [447, p. 8]. Some tribes performed the religious ritual of purification with substances that can hardly be considered hygienic, such as cow urine [447, p. 35]. The Bible contains the following strange statement: "He who touches the purifying water will be impure till evening" (Numbers 19: 22). What does this mean? To begin with, purification by water did not imply hygienic cleanliness and did not derive from it. The expression also betrays an ambivalent attitude to water as a substance sacred by tradition, but associated with a rejected deity.

The cult notions of purification by water and purification by fire derive from the act of communing with the deity incarnated in water and in fire. Magic properties were attributed to water and fire because they were associated with the deity.

The question arises: with what deity was water associated? The data available on the subject are inconsistent. It was shown in the chapter "Rain and Heaven" that the heaven goddess was the mistress of heavenly moisture. The conception of water as a substance associated with the female sex found expression in a number of customs. In the ancient Roman wedding ceremony, fire and water, symbolizing husband and wife, were placed on the threshold; fire and water were respectfully called "king and queen" in Russia [489a, p. 31]. "The Persians dedicate their most solemn sacrifices to fire and water," wrote Strabo. The cult meaning of the "fire and water" combination, expressing the relationship between male and female in mythicized nature, was interpreted in color symbolism: blue and red prevailed in the color gamut of Greek temples; membranes made from animal bladders used for church windows in early medieval Europe were painted these particular colors, which later affected the color gamut of stained-glass windows in Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals. The glass windows in Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals. The Khevsurs (ethnic Georgians) shrouded their dead in three

cloths — white, red, and blue. Blue and red predominated in the clothing of the dead buried in medieval tombs in Checheno-Ingushetia. Until today, pale blue and pink ribbons, modifications of the "louder" blue and red, are accessories of the wedding ceremony in Russia.

At the same time, myths and popular beliefs all over the world indicate that the deity of the nether universe was also associated with water. Black was considered agreeable to the spirit of water [371b, p. 310; 730a, p. 221], apparently because it was associated with the darkness of the earth's interior. The Aztecs believed that the rain god dwelled at the bottom of a well, i.e., within the earth's deep regions. In Nigeria, the thundergod Faro was a water god dwelling in the Niger River. It was an ancient custom to sprinkle seeds with water or strew them with ashes prior to sowing; either action was supposed to produce the same result [63, p. 135]. Baptism was sometimes performed with fire instead of water [447, p. 35]. According to Plutarch, the Philistines washed their newborns with wine. The fairy tale about a miraculous conception caused by drinking water also shows that water was associated with the male principle.

The mythical serpent was the deity of the nether regions. Not only earth, but also earthly waters were his sphere, so that the snake and the fish were frequently identified with each other in ancient mythology. The Latin letter N derives from a zigzag sign in the Phoenician alphabet which stood for the sound "n"; this is the initial letter in the Phoenician word *nun* meaning 'fish' or 'water snake'.¹²⁸ In the Sumerian language, *mūš-ki* meant 'snake-fish'. An ancient Georgian tribe referred to as *Mūški* (biblical Mesheh); its members may have worshiped a deity in the image of a snake-fish. The identification of creatures as dissimilar as snake and fish reflects an association between the snake and water. "The cosmogonic myth preserved in the faiths of peoples inhabiting different continents contends that once, before dry land emerged, everything was covered with oceanic waters in which there dwelt a primary source of all life in the image of a serpent" [118, p. 29]. The Egyptian water goddess Tefnut was portrayed with a cobra on her head. In Slavic myths, the serpent dwells in water, guards water, and loses its power when dry. Snakes and grass-snakes are associated with rain in Russian fairy tales [40c, p. 450]. The pottery of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture depicts snakes coiling in rain jets (Fig. 124: 1), Neolithic pottery of Central Europe displays strokes and combs (water signs) around snakes (Fig. 124: 2, 4, 6).

Rain and the snake are interrelated in the mythology of the Mayas [241, pp. 2, 3] and in the beliefs of North American Indians [784b, Table 16]. Related to the name of the Greek demigod of the sea Triton are certain Grecian hydronyms like Lake Tritonis and the river Triton [653, p. 71]. In the Rig-Veda, Trita is a water god. Indra in the Rig-Veda is referred to as "the bull [i.e., the earth god] which rose from the sea" [108, p. 576]. The name of the Neolithic earth god can be discerned in several Indo-European appellations for the sea: the Hittite *aruna* and

¹²⁸The Latin letter M derives from a fuller zigzag, which was called *mem* ('water') in the Phoenician alphabet.

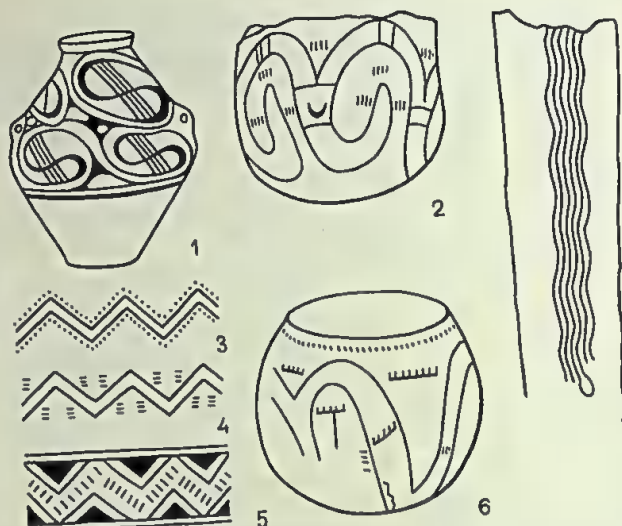


Fig. 124. Semantic connection of snake and water: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni, ca 3000 BC [696, p. 101]; 2—4 — Central Europe, Neolithic [381a, p. 227]; 5 — Philippines, 19th c. [750, pl. 15]; 6 — Germany, ca 3000 BC [381a, p. 230]; 7 — Southern Caucasus, ca 1000 BC [423, p. 6].

Sanskrit *árṇa* correspond to Uran and Varuna, while the Proto-Indo-European **mor, mar* ('sea, lake, bog') correlate with his other names which have the root *m.r.* The Peruvian Indians' supreme god Viracocha, whose statuette has snakes depicted on it, rose from the lake.

Ethnographers have recorded a former belief in particular demons in the Southern Caucasus. The Armenians referred to these as *višap*, the Georgians as *vešapi*. They were pictured as a bull or fish, but most commonly as a snake. The *višaps* were associated with earthly waters, usually springs. To them was attributed the power of producing thunderstorms and the tempest, they could rise into the sky and descend to the ground, or more usually, into the lake. As in myths of other peoples, *višap*-snakes take possession of water and maidens. Human sacrifices were offered to them [610, p. 37]. Stone idols of these creatures have been found in the mountains of the Southern Caucasus. On one of them (Fig. 124: 7) a snake is inscribed in wavy lines representing water.

A snake on a Peruvian statuette is depicted as a river (Fig. 129: 4). The association between the serpent and a river is recorded in Siberian myths [24, p. 19]. In the Chechenian and Ingushian languages *hi* means 'river,' while *áhi* is the Sanskrit for 'serpent.' The ancient Indian myth about the origin of rivers testifies to association between the notions "snake" and "water": by defeating the serpent Vritra (Vṛtrá), Indra released waters which the serpent had kept in captivity, and they streamed along the monster's body as along a river bed [434, p. 11]. In Mayan myths, too, the serpent locks up the waters [756, p. 98]. Myths and beliefs of all the continents mention the serpent as a bestower of rain.

B. Rybakov suggests the following explanation for the mythological connection between the snake and water: "In the mind of the primitive farmer, the grass-snake living near water and creeping out into the open during rainfall was associated with the incomprehensible mechanism of rain" [468a, p. 36]. This factor could, indeed, have played a certain

role, but it was not the only one. The river or stream meandering like a snake could have prompted the "snake-water" association. As the snake creeps out of its hole, the stream issues from the ground and meanders forth. This is apparently why the Hittites, Etruscans, and Greeks placed their sanctuaries near springs. A Mesopotamian Neolithic design shows water with adjacent plants flowing from the mouth of a deer (Fig. 208: 11), the deer, as discussed above, being a creature mythologically associated with earth. A Southern Caucasian *višap* depicts water issuing from the mouth of a bull (Fig. 67: 3), an incarnation of the earth deity. The German *Bach* and the Turkic *bağ* both mean 'stream'; this word is etymologically related to the Slavic *byk* ('bull'), for the god in the image of a bull was regarded as the lord of the earth and of earthly waters. In an ancient mythological conception, waters issue from a place where "dazzling fire" burns [108, p. 675], in all probability, from the earth's interior. The Armenians used to have a custom where a woman offered a thanksgiving sacrifice to a spring after giving birth [7, p. 144] (because the stream issuing from the spring was associated with the divine serpent, the patron of conception).

Why was it that in the Mesolithic the deer was chosen for the sacrificial offering to water? Perhaps because the myth that the earth god, who was also the water god, was a deer hunter, already existed then. Other sacrifices, too, were offered to the god of the nether universe, in particular, beautiful maidens were put to death by drowning; this custom existed in Ancient Egypt, in China, and among the Mayas. On the other hand, the mythical serpent demanded girls in tribute. This suggests that the god of earth and water was pictured as a serpent. In addition to other evidence, it points to the fact that the deity of nether waters was male.

The female snake also figures in myths, as, for example, the Chinese Nuy-va, the foremother of mankind, pictured as a half-woman and half-snake, or the Greek Echidna, the snake maiden. This may be a likening of the god's spouse to her husband's image, like imaging the god-bull's spouse as a cow.

Noteworthy are the similar sounding Nostratic words **kula* ('snake') and **küla* ('lake, pond') [210a, pp. 308, 305]. Similar to them is **küla* ('community, kin, tribe, family') [210a, p. 362].¹²⁹ This may be because the underworld god, one of the two supreme Neolithic, and probably also Paleolithic divinities, was considered the progenitor of mankind.

Other etymological parallels of interest can also be quoted. Phonetically similar are the Nostratic words **nohra* ('moist, flow') [210b, p. 94],¹³⁰ **nara* ('fire, flame') [210b, p. 85],¹³¹ and **nayra* ('man, male') [210b, pp. 92, 93].¹³²

¹²⁹Hence the Old Irish *cland* ('kin, clan'), Lithuanian *kiltis* ('tribe'), Dravidian *küli* ('family'), Finnish *kyla* ('village'), Altaian *kil* or *gela* ('home').

¹³⁰Hence the Aramaic *nahar* ('river, flow'), Finno-Ugric *nar, nero* ('flow, moisture'), Dravidian *nir, niru* ('water'), Altaian *nor, naru* ('humid, bog, lake').

¹³¹The Arabic *nyr* ('fire') and Aramaic *nūr* ('sun') stem from it.

¹³²Words meaning 'male' are genetically associated with it: the Sanskrit *nār, nāra*, Armenian *air*, Phrygian *anar*, and Albanian *nyer*. The Sanskrit *nāraka* ('hell') also seems to be of this root.

Thus, water was associated with the snake, and the snake was a religious object since the remotest times of the Paleolithic. This seems to be why water was venerated.

But why should anyone venerate the snake? The true properties of snakes could hardly have been sufficient grounds for veneration. Speculations about a "totemic ancestor" cannot be taken seriously. The reason is in that the serpent was considered an incarnation of a major deity. The Druids venerated snakes and called themselves "snakes" [865, p. 100]. In India temples dedicated to snakes exist and sacrifices are offered in honor of snakes. Myths refer to Zeus' adversary, the serpent Typhon, as a deity; this monster's attribute in the form of an egg-shaped stone was kept in the temple of Delphi. (The Egyptians imaged Typhon as a donkey, an animal associated with the underworld). Snakes were deified in Egyptian mythology. Mythologies of different peoples pictured the Demiurge, the creator of the material world, as a serpent. Chinese mythology considered the serpent the primordial, very first god [371a, p. 470]. Monarchs deified their own persons, so the snake came to symbolize royal status in Ancient Egypt, India, and the Incas' empire. The ancient Syrian Gado was the spirit of home, who bestowed prosperity; this must be the same patron of the house in the image of a serpent. In Canaan, the underworld god Baal was also referred to as Baal-Gad. *Gada* is the Slavic word for 'reptile.' Since this reptile was believed to possess prophetic powers, the Russian words *gad* ('prophet') and *gadai* ('tell fortunes') derive from its name. The name of the Greek god Hades may also belong in this category.

Snake veneration was worldwide. It must have existed for thousands of years. It had to emerge in the remotest times of human history, if one considers its popularity in different parts of the world, among peoples as distant both territorially and chronologically as contemporary American Indians and ancient Egyptians, modern Baltic peoples and ancient Elamites.

Scholars who are still inclined to favor nineteenth century evolutionist views and believe that there is a common scheme of social development which all peoples allegedly go through, tend to see a manifestation of a certain stage in any phenomenon of past culture. According to them, the worldwide veneration of snakes "reflected a stage in primitive thinking" [453, p. 89]. But then it remains unexplained why snake veneration should have arisen at a certain stage of cultural evolution, to say nothing of the fact that this "stage" covers the entire history of mankind, from the Paleolithic to the twentieth century. No explanation whatsoever is offered for what led to snake veneration. Indeed, who needs explanation, when a dogma is close at hand.

Many ethnographers, archeologists, and specialists in the history of religion adhere to the rationalistic and pragmatic interpretation of so-called "popular" beliefs and rites. How would they account for snake veneration in terms of their theories? Snakes, after all, played a minor role in human life and economy. Paleolithic art indicates that even then the snake image was of sacral significance. Neolithic and Aeneolithic art in Europe and Asia is virtually permeated by snake images (Fig. 125). Snake veneration among early farming tribes could not have been prompted by anything

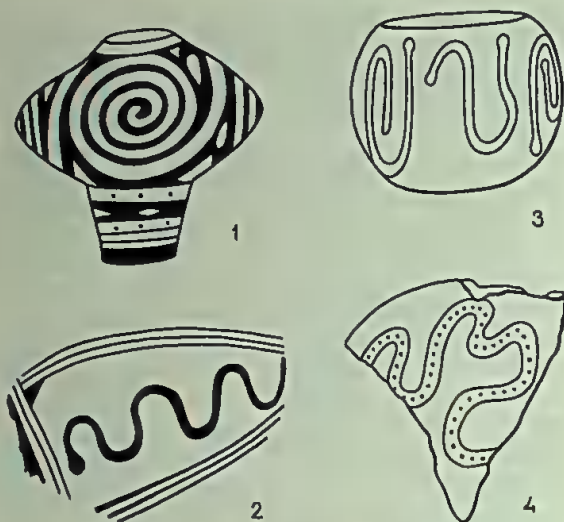


Fig. 125. Representations of snakes in European Neolithic: 1, 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [468a, p. 37; 696, p. 97]; 3 — Czechoslovakia [381a, p. 226]; 4 — Yugoslavia [719, p. 210].

in their agricultural economy, or by characteristics of their everyday life, or any other objective factor. One must assume that it was inherited from the Paleolithic along with other religious and ideological conceptions. During the later periods of Bronze and Iron, the snake continued to be held sacred by force of tradition. Snake veneration still existed not long ago in India, Rumania, Greece, and Lithuania. The worldwide veneration of snakes, devoid of rational foundation, is an indication that popular beliefs are based on irrational fear and uncriticized tradition.

Myths describe the world's three-level structure: the inaccessible sky above, the mysterious depths of the earth below; the center of the universe was pictured as a gigantic tree with roots reaching into the lower world and branches into the upper world. This primitive cosmogonic conception, which, as suggested by some evidence, was already in existence in the Paleolithic, survived into the nineteenth century in folklore.

Birds were visible representatives of the celestial sphere. As for the underworld kingdom, "creeping creatures" and amphibians, such as snakes, lizards, frogs, were considered its representatives, as follows from the beliefs of many peoples [290b, p. 208]; in Eastern Asia, and probably also in prehistoric Egypt, this role was ascribed to the turtle. It is apparently in connection with such beliefs that frog amulets and sacred images of this amphibian were common in Europe both in the ancient period [696, pp. 178, 179] and in more recent times [858, p. 49]. Some mythologies describe the world as resting on the back of a frog. Frog croaking was believed to portend rain. In China, the frog is associated with the moon [730a, p. 613]. In Russian fairy tales the frog is identified with the snake [152, p. 322]. The frog was idolized in Ancient Egypt [251, p. 201]. In Daghestan, killing a frog was a sin [104, p. 122]. In Lithuania, some ancient gravestones depict a frog [693, p. 31]. The frog's ancient name was taboo and eventually forgotten in many languages [108, p. 534]. According to Russian apocrypha, the Devil tempted Eve in the image of the frog rather than the serpent. A Latvian riddle compares

the frog and the mole (a creature dwelling in the earth). Mythological thinking attributed to the frog, associated with the same deity as the snake, the same features as to the snake: it is an ill-boding chthonic creature, wise and possessing prophetic powers. Like the snake, it is considered a protector of the human dwelling [240, pp. 200-204]. "Many peoples revere the frog as a symbol of fertility. The Vainakhians believe that the frog purifies water. It is mentioned in solemn oaths" [88, p. 49]. Russian peasants placed a frog in milk to keep the milk fresh (to no avail). The frog symbolized sensual love in Ancient Rome; what positive grounds could underlie this notion? It is that the frog was looked upon as a representative of the sphere of a deity, one of whose specific features was the sexual urge.

However, the serpent was the preferred incarnation of the deified lord of the lower world. The preference given to the snake as an image of the male deity of the earth's interior might be based on the snake's external appearance, as a vivid incarnation of impregnating powers, due to its phallic shape. And the upper world was incarnated by the bird. That is apparently why snakes and birds were portrayed in the Paleolithic. When bisons, horses, deer, mammoths, and other animals were depicted, this may be accounted for by their importance as objects hunted for food; but snakes and birds had no practical significance in human life.

The Russian word *zmeia* ("snake") is a euphemism; an earlier appellation for the snake was *už* (meaning grass-snake in modern Russian); the snake was called *aži* in ancient Iranian, *iž* in Armenian, *anguis* in Latin, the general proto-form being **eg(h)i* [108, p. 526]. *Už* is phonetically similar to the Russian *užas* ("great fear"), *anguis* to the Latin *angustus*, Lithuanian *añkštas*, German *Angst* ("fear"). The snake in itself, however, is not particularly awesome or terrifying. The thing is that it represented an awe-inspiring deity.

The snake image of the god of earth and earthly waters, which took shape in the European and Western Asian region, experienced transformation in its dissemination to other parts of the world. In China, for example, it split into several mythical creatures. These included: the rain-producing dragon Lung (legless in ancient times, i.e., the serpent); the creator of the world Pan-gu, also a dragon/serpent; the red "mountain spirit" Chju-lung with a human face and snake body; the "sea lord" in the image of the dragon Lung-van; the deity of water Gun-Gun with a snake body, human face, and red hair. As in Europe and Western Asia, the Chinese dragon/serpent was venerated as a patron of the human dwelling. Later transformations of the Neolithic god-serpent into an "evil spirit" also reached China.

The Indian and Southeast Asian mythical serpent Nāga is not equivalent to the awe-inspiring lord of the world as he appears in Neolithic European and Western Asian mythology. Yet he betrays his origin in possessing a number of the Neolithic god's specific features: Nāga, too, was a representative of the underground world and of terrestrial waters, the bestower of rain, an incarnation of wisdom, a guardian of earthly treasure; he was also at odds with the bird. A great many Indian and Indo-Chinese toponyms

derive from his name. The extent of this serpent's veneration as a major deity can be seen from the fact that the tribes who inhabited the northern part of Hindustan before the Aryans conquered it, were called the Naga.

The Indian *nāga*, like the Latin *anguis*, can be traced to **eg(h)i*. Related to these are probably the Proto-Indo-European **nagu* ("funerary boat"), the ancient Teutonic ethnonym *Angle*, the Marse's (an ancient tribe) witchcraft and healing goddess Angitia, the water spirit Nik in Scandinavian paganism, the Christian saint Nicolas (Nic el?) — patron of seafarers, the ancient Peruvian hereditary ruling caste Inca, and the ancient Hebrew mythical serpent Nakhsh who dwelt in the primordial ocean and was hostile to God in heaven.

The feathered serpent of pre-Columbian American myths also possesses features of the European and Western Asian god-serpent: he is the creator of the world, he is connected with terrestrial waters, can rise into the sky and produce rain; he fathers a young god incarnating maize. The Aztec god of rain and thunder, Tlaloc, had a black body and dwelt on mountain summits; his Sapotecan analogue Kossikho¹³³ was also portrayed with a black body and, in particular, a forked, i.e., snake tongue. Kukumatz, the winged serpent of the Toltecs (Mexico),¹³⁴ was the spouse of the Mother Goddess; his epithet was "the heart of the sea." As the serpent was graphically represented in combination with a disk, the symbol of his spouse, which later came to be understood as a solar sign, he became associated with the sun in pre-Columbian America, as in Ancient Egypt.

The earth god could stay in the sky as the moon; the Neolithic representation of the snake is therefore marked with a crescent — the emblem of the bull-moon, i.e., of the earth god (Fig. 124: 2). The Neolithic earth god, as will be discussed later, fell asleep for the duration of winter; according to a Chinese popular belief, the dragon dwelling under the ground sleeps through the winter, waking up at springtime; he rises into the sky and sends down rain [756, pp. 68, 121].

Although the zigzag designated the serpent and the serpent symbolized lightning, in rare cases can the zigzag be positively identified as a designation of lightning (Fig. 15: 4). The opinion occasionally encountered that the zigzag meant lightning in ancient graphic symbolism [138, p. 94; 655, p. 516] is not supported by argumentation. Other symbols were used to designate lightning. The sign of lightning is usually a wavy line. It symbolized lightning not only in Ancient Greece and Rome [725], but also in pre-Columbian America: this is the shape of the lightning which the Aztec thundergod Tlaloc holds in his hand. The wavy line was used to designate lightning because such a sign was a symbol of the serpent, i.e., lightning was not depicted but rather marked, denoted by the symbol of the deity identified with lightning in mythological consciousness. The combination of the lightning sign with other symbols of the same deity, including the bull, flower, arrow, and spear, deserves special mention [725, Figs. 1, 2, 20, 29].

¹³³ The root *k.s+h/k* was one of the terms associated with the earth god in Western Asia.

¹³⁴ Haitian and Hittite mythology have an evil demon named Hahimas.

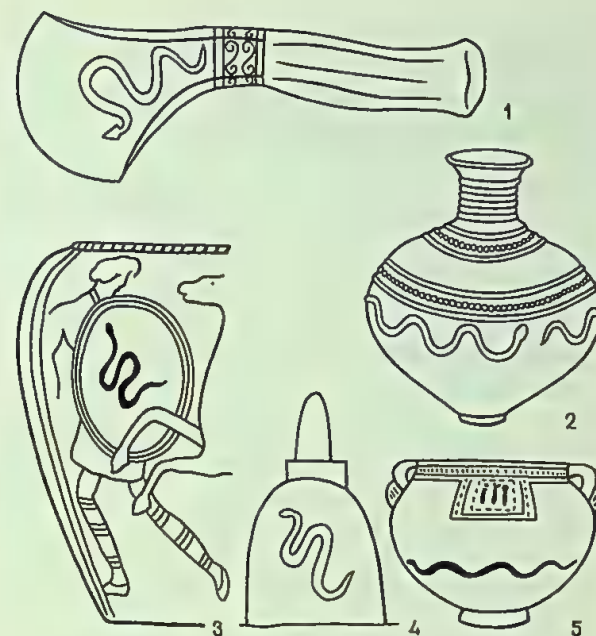


Fig. 126. Representations of snakes in Iron and Bronze Ages: 1 — Koban culture [537, pl. 3]; 2 — Georgia, Bronze Age [276, p. 74]; 3—5 — Ancient Greece [618c, p. 318; 524, p. 114; 66, p. 64].

Consequently, the snake was regarded as an incarnation of the deity. Its veneration was based on this, and hence the qualities attributed to it: wisdom, immortality, healing power, etc. Other opinions exist concerning snake veneration. M. Gimbutas, for example, believes that the twisting and turning snake symbolized incessant cosmic motion and was an incarnation of the eternity of life [696, pp. 94, 95]. G. Chursin suggests that the venomous snake was idolized because of the fear it inspired: "The snake inspiring awe in man must have been expected to inspire awe in evil spirits as well. Hence the widespread use of snakeskin, snake teeth, etc., as amulets" [593, p. 11]. The same notion, in G. Chursin's opinion, underlay the ancient use of snakes in preparing medicines.

One can see how subjective these speculations are. The snake was venerated as an incarnation of a deity and not due to its specific properties. That is why its image figured on weapons, vessels, tombstones (Fig. 126). Healing properties were attributed to the snake because the earth was looked on as an incarnation of strength and god and was considered immortal: the earth this god health and was considered immortal: the earth this god represented demonstrates inexhaustible vitality, returning to life each spring after winter hibernation. Besides, the snake shedding its skin creates the impression of starting a "new life." An ancient Egyptian funerary prayer reads: "I am the serpent Sāta... I die and return to life again." The snake personified immortality [524, p. 116].

Faith in the mythical healing properties of the snake played such an enormous role in ancient healing practices that the snake image became incorporated in the emblem of medicine. This does not reflect the true properties of the snake, but rather the mythological conception of the snake, the patron of healing. So-called medicinal remedies were prepared from body parts not only of snakes, but also of other creatures perceived as associated

with the earth god: the eagle, kite, raven, dog, mouse, lion [240, pp. 191, 251, 279, a.o.]. The bear was regarded as a patron of healers by the Zuñi tribe (Mexico) [730a, p. 190], because in ancient times the bear was one of the earth god's incarnations. A belief in the healing powers of blacksmiths and the forge was similarly due to the fact that the underworld god, pictured as a blacksmith, was considered a healer.

The legendary ancient Greek physician Asclepius (Aesculapius in the Roman tradition) was the god of the healing art. He was a personification of the archaic earth god's corresponding function. This can be seen from the fact that in legends Asclepius assumed the image of a snake or was compared to a mole. This is also suggested by his very name: it is similar to the Greek words for 'mole' — *skáloph*, and 'lizard' (i.e., a miniature dragon) — *askalábos*.¹³⁵

As the god who was considered a healer was the lord of the earth and terrestrial waters, healing properties were also attributed to water and soil. Hence the superstition that if a bleeding wound is dusted with soil, it will expedite the healing process.

Healing methods of Tasmanians, whose culture was at the Stone Age level, can be taken as a typical illustration of the influence of superstitions on the concepts of medicine. When a member of the tribe was dying, sick people gathered around him to absorb the healing power emanating from him. The usual healing remedies were the ashes of a burnt corpse or a beverage of water with particles scraped from a corpse bone. What "indigenous folk experience" on earth could have prompted such healing methods? It could only have been the notion that the dead retiring to the other world partake of the qualities of the lord of the beyond. One might argue: the Tasmanians, savages, what can you expect from them? But Europeans, too, believed in the healing powers of the dead, of their bones, of soil from graves [540, p. 109]. The Romans believed that nails used in crucifixions possessed healing properties.

The logic of mythological thinking differs from realistic logic, and the investigator will be mistaken if he tries to interpret particular beliefs in terms of common sense. For example, there was a worldwide belief that the dead can contribute to rich crops. B. Rybakov offers the following explanation for this: "Deceased forefathers were interred in the earth; this produced a notion in the mind of the ancient cultivator that the dead promoted abundant crops" [475, p. 425]. But the belief that the dead had power over crops was not exclusive to peoples who interred their dead. It was also shared by those who burned them, left them for the birds of prey to eat, put them on trees, etc.

Ancient beliefs also attributed other powers to the dead in addition to that of affecting crops. In Shintoism, the dead are bestowers of life and prosperity. A common belief

¹³⁵It is likely that another underworld creature, the magic deer, rather than the earth god proper, was the prototype for Aesculapius. The following evidence suggests this: Aesculapius was regarded as the son of Apollo (Apollo was the former underworld god, so the deer was his son); he was struck by Zeus' lightning (lightning is a metaphor for the arrow, and the deer was killed by an arrow); he was punished for his good deeds (as was the magic deer). The name Aesculapius is believed to be associated with the name Talipinu [108, p. 532], who was the son of the thundergod, i.e., of the underworld god.

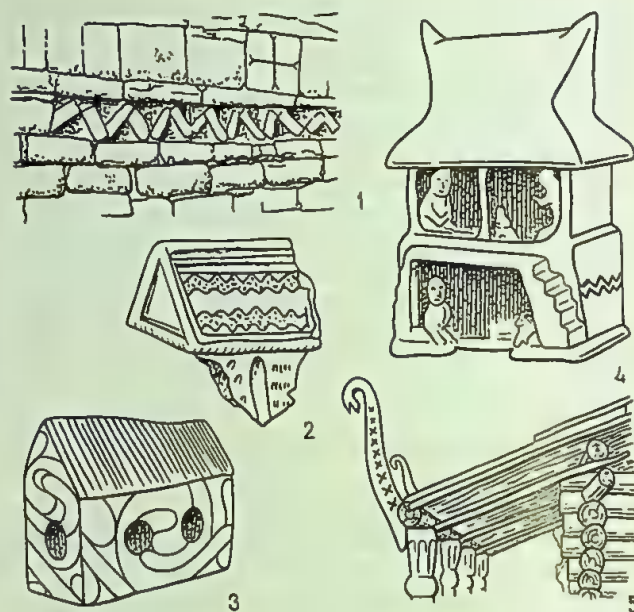


Fig. 127. Sign of snake on structures: 1 — widespread decorative device in vernacular Daghestan architecture; 2 — Mesopotamia, ca 3000 BC [544, p. 56]; 3 — Bulgaria, Neolithic [381a, p. 210]; 4 — pre-Columbian America [128, p. 68]; 5 — fragment of Rekom sanctuary in North Ossetia.

that there is a connection between the dead and the weather is based on a notion that the dead partake of the powers of the lord of the underworld who makes thunderstorms.

In Daghestan the snake was venerated as a patron of the home [592, p. 80]. This view also was shared by other Caucasian peoples, as well as by the Greeks, Albanians, Slavs, and ethnic minorities of Dravidian India; it occupied a conspicuous place in the beliefs of the ancient Romans [787, pp. 279-281]. Apparently in association with this idea, zigzags or other representations of snakes adorned structures in different countries and in different epochs (Fig. 127). Snakes were portrayed on the gates of country estates and fortresses in Georgia and Armenia [32, Table 5] and on the gates of ancient Western Asian cities [441, p. 128].

M. Nilsson, one of those professing a rationalistic interpretation of myths and beliefs, maintained that the notion of the snake as protector of the human dwelling rests on the fact that snakes breed within house walls and basements [787, p. 283]. The origin of the notion is different, however. At the dawn of human history, when people lived in caves, the earth god was considered the master of the caves. Therefore the serpent became to be regarded as a protector of the human dwelling, and later of all sorts of structures, including bridges, fortresses, and also towns. This function of the earth god was later reinforced by the fact that he was considered a progenitor of people and by the conviction that since a structure rests on the ground, it can only be safe if the earth god is favorable to it and to those living in it. Apart from that, the "serpent of the depths," who guarded the World Tree, was looked on as a guardian. The Athenians believed that a huge snake lived on the Acropolis and guarded it. In Egyptian myths, snakes guarded the sun god's boat. The serpent of the ancient Teutons guarded the apple tree that belonged

to the goddess; the Greeks had a similar legend [748, p. 370].

In particular, snakes were considered guardians or owners of hoards and treasures. Popular beliefs about serpents guarding hidden treasure circulated in Ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe; they are also known in Africa [200, p. 142; 240, pp. 169, 173; 814, p. 151; 841, p. 215]. These concepts may have arisen from the fact that noble metals and precious stones are extracted from the earth and that hoards are found in the ground, in the sphere belonging to the serpent; this implies that they are in the serpent's possession. Moreover, since the function of guardian (of the World Tree, of the human dwelling) was generally attributed to the serpent, he would also guard the treasures hidden in the ground.

In ancient times the snake was regarded as an incarnation of wisdom. A. Afanasiev accounts for the origin of this notion as follows. Primitive consciousness saw wisdom in slyness and cunning. The snake moves in curves and twists. Afanasiev presents some interesting comparisons [40c, p. 5]: the Russian *lukavy* ('cunning') means literally 'curved' (cf. *luk* — 'arch, river bend'). The Serbian *hitar* ('sly') means literally 'swift,' which applies to the snake. The snake creeps speedily, twisting as it moves; consequently, it is sly, cunning. Therefore it is wise. That is why *lukavy*, which once meant 'wise', became a euphemism for "devil," the serpent being one of his incarnations.

But, to begin with, the words *lukavy* and *hitar* derive from the names of the earth god (*luk* and *k.t*); and second, these comparisons, while pointing to a connection between the snake image and the notion of wisdom, still do not present a convincing explanation why the snake was considered wise. It would seem that the view of the deity embodied by the snake applied to the creature. Why the Black God was considered wise is a different problem which remains unsolved. In any case, it was not because of his divinity: the Great Goddess, so far as can be judged from available data, was considered insane, rather than wise.

Since the serpent was an incarnation of the deity of the underworld, its image had chthonic connotations. Snake skeletons are found in Bronze Age burials in the south of Russia [548, p. 141]. The Ossets believed that snake flesh revived the aging souls of the dead [364, p. 119]. The Greeks and Lithuanians had a notion that the souls of the dead lived in snakes [787, p. 283; 693, p. 35]. This was shared by African Blacks [240, p. 168]. Ancient Egyptian texts refer to snakes as "living souls" [225, p. 281].

The attitude to the snake in ancient myths and in later beliefs is dual. In Europe, the snake was an ominous creature in some beliefs and a benevolent one in others [240, pp. 170, 171]. Not infrequently people avoided pronouncing the word "snake". In both Europe and Asia, it was believed that a traveller would be much better off if he turned back when a snake crossed the road in front of him. "The snake and the related magic bead revive the dead, and bring happiness, wealth, and good fortune in Ossetian folk tales, although in other versions, grief, failure, and bad luck are associated with the snake" [516, p. 152]. There was a popular belief in Albania that if a snake entered your house, it would entail the death of a male member of the family [228b, p. 317]; the Greeks believed it was a bad

omen if a snake came into a house. At the same time, the snake had the reputation of a patron of the home [240, p. 161]. Some American Indian tribes saw the snake as a protector of the dwelling, others exorcised the evil spirit in the image of a serpent from the house. Snakes were adversaries of the sun god Ra in Egyptian mythology, while other snakes were on the god's side, protecting him. The *Pyramid Texts* refer to snakes as gods or brothers of gods [766b, p. 68], though in general the snake was regarded as an incarnation of evil in Egyptian cult concepts. The ambivalent attitude to the snake can be found in biblical texts too. The Old Testament's serpent is the enemy of mankind; Moses, however, ordered a copper snake made to heal the sick.

One might perhaps conjecture that the dual attitude towards the snake expressed the differences in attitude towards venomous snakes and harmless grass-snakes; however, there are no mythological or ethnographic data to substantiate such an assumption. Examples illustrating different cult and mythological attitudes towards snakes show that these attitudes were inherited from times when the serpent was some peoples' deity and a stranger to others; the mixing of peoples produced mixed religious conceptions. Hence probably the dual attitude to the deity, and to the divine in general. For example, the Latin *sacer*, like the French *sacré*, can mean both 'sacred' and 'damned'; the Hebrew *hesed* means both 'piety' and 'abomination'; some peoples' ribald language mentions cult attributes and even the name of God Himself.

The dual attitude to the lord of the nether regions found expression, in particular, in the dual attitude to water which in popular beliefs is the abode of evil spirits, the merman and the mermaid. According to a Slavic tradition, an evil spirit may, without being observed, enter and possess a human being through his drinking water. The water had

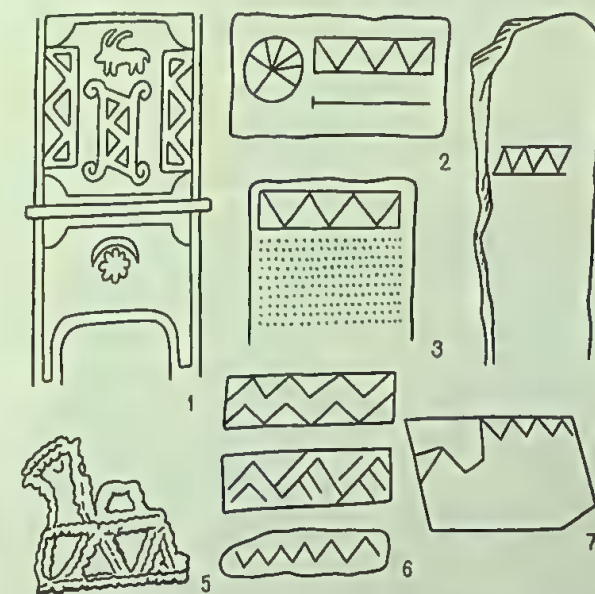


Fig. 128. Zigzag in a frame: 1 — fireplace moulding, Daghestan, Vikri [139, p. 85]; 2 — carved stone in the wall of 17th c. structure, Kwanada [375, p. 145]; 3 — tombstone in medieval Daghestan, Vikri; 4 — Volga region, ca 500 BC [561, p. 184]; 5 — Russia, 12th c. [552, p. 108]; 6 — Armenia, ca 3000 BC [340, pp. 6, 14]; 7 — Ukraine, ca 1500 BC [548, p. 141].

to be covered to keep the "enemy" away. S. Tokarev writes in this connection: "This custom is certainly of perfectly rational origin: water left uncovered gets polluted with dust" [521, p. 72]. But it was not obligatory to cover the water with a lid; it was sufficient to "cover" it with two sticks arranged crosswise.

A conclusion can thus be made: the wave or the zigzag line designated the snake or water, these meanings of the symbol being interrelated.

As already stated, an elementary design such as the zigzag could emerge independently in different places and have dissimilar meanings. Not infrequently, however, this motif has specific elements and forms distinctive patterns whose similarity in various cultures can hardly be regarded as mere coincidence. A zigzag within a frame was encountered in Daghestan more than once (Fig. 128: 1-3). This sign is known in other places as well, for example, in the Southern Caucasus and in Russia (Fig. 128: 4-6). It is therefore a specific symbol. A design decorating an ancient vessel found in the Ukraine provides a clue to its semantics. The vessel is decorated with a chain of rhombic shapes. The rhombus is an earth sign [19]. On this vessel, one of the figures in the sequence of rhombic shapes contains a snake image (Fig. 128: 7), which points to the semantic relationship between snake and earth in cult conceptions [548, p. 141]. The zigzag in a frame, an ideograph of the notion "snake/earth," apparently derives from this type of design. This is yet another proof of the assumption that the snake used to be an incarnation of earth, more specifically, of the earth god. This is why the Russian words *zmeia* ('snake') and *zemlya* ('earth') have the same root.

The snake sign is often present on Neolithic female statuettes (Fig. 129: 1-3); this combination was also known in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 129: 4). The semantics of these designs may be understood in the light of the conceptions involving the relationships between the earth god and the heaven goddess.

Figure 130: 1 represents a design carved on a stone from Daghestan; superficially, it looks like a variant of the common ornamental "Byzantine twig" motif (Fig. 130: 2, 3). But here the spirals do not grow out of the wavy line; the design is therefore not a stylized representation of a branch or a vine. In this case the wavy band designates a river, or water in general, while the spirals represent plants being watered. This symbolic design on a medieval carved stone from Daghestan corresponds semantically

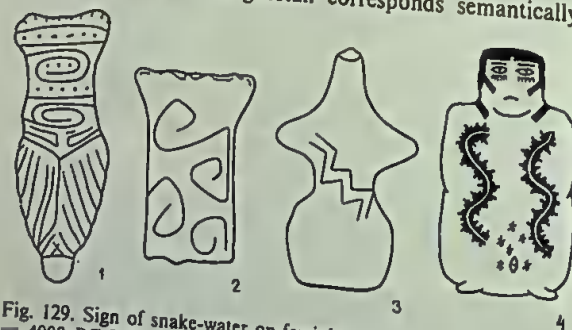


Fig. 129. Sign of snake-water on feminine figurines: 1 — Rumania, ca 4000 BC [259, p. 83]; 2 — Germany, ca 4000 BC [259, p. 82]; 3 — Crete, ca 3000 BC [867, p. 111]; 4 — Peru, ca 1300 [371a, p. 179].

to the zigzag with shoots depicted on a clay vessel in Asia Minor eight thousand years earlier (Fig. 131: 4). Nineteenth century Ukrainian embroidery (Fig. 131: 3) shows the same motif. A fragment of Georgian embroidery (Fig. 131: 2) also features a combination of water and plant symbols (the M-shaped sign designates ram horns symbolizing vegetation).

Very likely, ancient symbolic designs of this type, which were an expression of the farmer's application for water, served as a prototype for the much more recent ornamental "Byzantine twig" motif. Neither plant branches nor vines undulate like waves in nature.

The idea that the "Byzantine twig" motif in Chinese decorative art is a combination of cloud signs (Fig. 131: 5) has been proposed [289]. This may be so, but such a pattern could only have been formed if the artist was familiar with the corresponding motif from Asia Minor: its convergent recurrence is out of the question.

An engraving on a Koban artifact (Fig. 131: 1) is similar to our Daghestan design. It is true, though, that what is shown here is not a wave, but rather a snake with spiral scrolls all around. Despite the fact that the snake and the water symbols are semantically similar, this substitution somewhat alters the meaning of the ideograph. The substitution does not seem to be accidental. Another carved stone from Daghestan (Fig. 131: 6) shows a snake surrounded by L-shaped signs which once designated the same notion as the scroll, namely the plant shoot (Fig. 131: 3, 4), but meaning something else in this case. Figure 131: 7 depicts snakes among crosses and swastikas which were perceived as conventional designations of birds in the Bronze Age.¹³⁶ The designs in Figure 131: 1, 6 perhaps illustrate a new subject, other than those pertaining to early farmers' topics: a confrontation between a snake and a bird. This theme was essential in Indo-European mythology; it was also expressed in figurative designs (Fig. 132).¹³⁷

It is common knowledge that solar eclipses were accounted for in ancient times as attempts by the dragon to swallow the luminary. An Egyptian myth dealing with the alternation of day and night presents snakes as the forces of darkness, antagonistic to the sun. However, the designs in Figure 132 were not meant to illustrate solar eclipse or the alternation of day and night. They express the idea of the struggle between the heaven god and the serpent, of rivalry between the "prince of light" and the "prince of darkness." The image of St. George who slew the dragon with his spear illustrates the corresponding myth. In Ancient Iran and India, New Year festivals featured mystery plays centering around the killing of the dragon by a divine hero who conquers the monster.

¹³⁶The semantics and the origins of these signs are analyzed in the relevant chapters.

¹³⁷The motif of combat between bird and snake was also popular in Byzantine and ancient American art. That this motif implied a struggle between mythical creatures rather than between a real bird and a snake is confirmed by the version in frescoes found in cult structures in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Mexico, which comprise representations of a bird-man standing on the back of a feathered serpent [569, p. 70]. In an old Jewish legend, a swallow and a lizard confront each other, the swallow being associated with water and the lizard with fire.



Fig. 130. Wavy line with sprouts, Daghestan: 1, 2 — carved stones in wall masonry, Tsurayi; 3 — framing of a door, Urada.

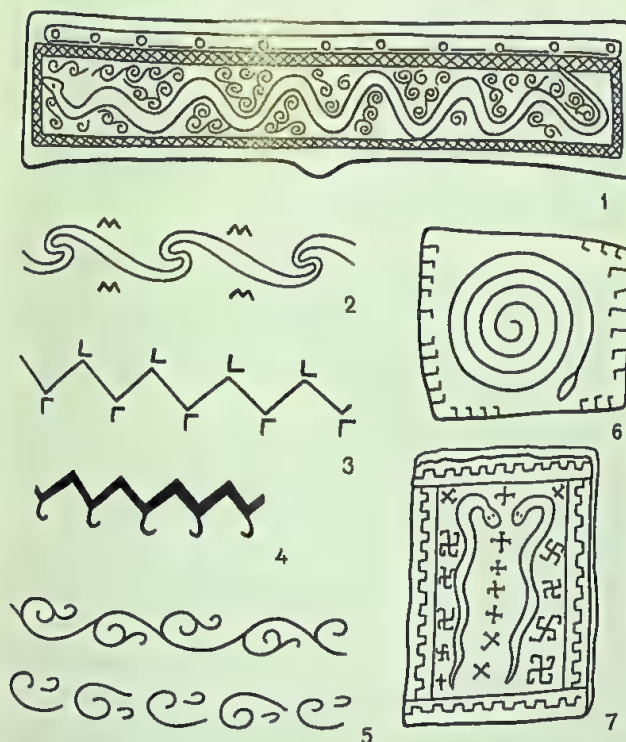


Fig. 131. River and vegetation or snake and bird: 1 — Koban culture bronze article [646b, pl. 10]; 2 — Georgian embroidery [305, p. 11]; 3 — Ukrainian embroidery [95, pl. 16]; 4 — ornament on pottery, 5000–4000 BC, Asia Minor [764b, p. 423]; 5 — ornamental motif in Chinese decorative art [284, p. 6]; 6 — carved stone in mosque masonry, Daghestan, Itsari; 7 — carved stone, Ancient Greece [858, p. 197].

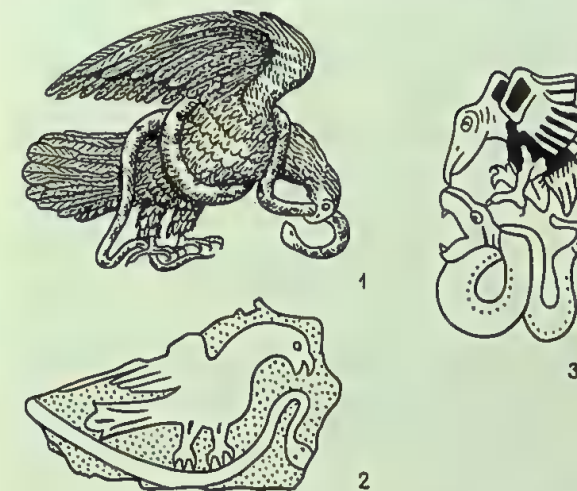


Fig. 132. Battle between bird and snake: 1 — Byzantine mosaic [704, pl. 36]; 2 — picture on Alanian pottery, Northern Caucasus, 12th c. [269, fig. 11]; 3 — ancient Mexican picture [118, p. 32].

releases waters kept in confinement in the monster's castle, and lets them irrigate the dry soil [854, p. 41]. This myth reflected a situation which began at the turn of the third and second millennia B.C. That period saw an ideological struggle expressed externally as a confrontation between new and old religious conceptions. It is very possible that the collision of ideologies also reflected a struggle for territory, a struggle for existence between the expanding Indo-European and Semitic tribes, on the one hand, and the Neolithic aborigines of Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus, on the other.

The common ornamental motif of wavy or zigzag lines skirting dots (Fig. 133: 2) tells a tale. Many peoples used this device to portray snakes (Fig. 133: 1); it is commonly

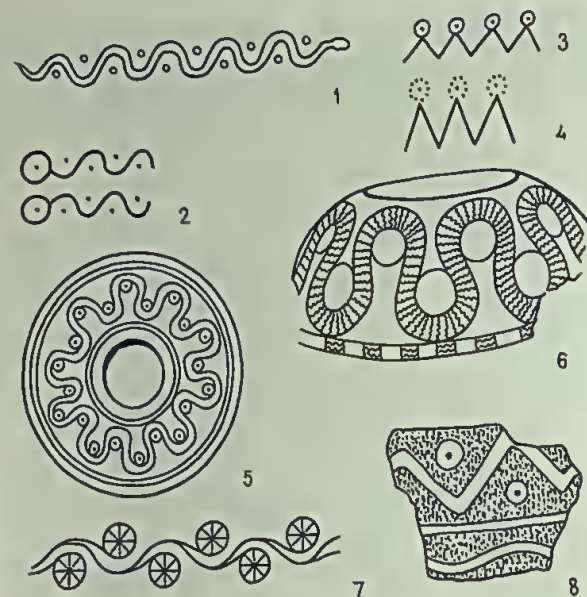


Fig. 133. River and seed or snake and the sun: 1 — Bronze Age representation of snake in the Caucasus [517, p. 135], also among ethnic groups of Siberia, American Indians, Australian aborigines, and in Ancient Asia Minor [203, p. 10; 216a, p. 8; 71, p. 70]; 2 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC [407, p. 73]; 3 — Russia, Middle Ages [138, p. 94]; 4 — Iran, Bronze Age [716, p. 129]; 5 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [825, p. 86]; 6 — Georgia, ca 1500 BC [276, pl. 76]; 7 — Northern Europe, Bronze Age [768, fig. 1]; 8 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 165].

assumed that the dots outside the wave, as well as those on it, are a conventional way of showing spots on snakeskin (Figs. 52, 107, 109, 125). Figure 133: 2 seems to show a pair of snakes. However, the ornamental motif in Figure 133: 8 cannot be a snake representation. Here, the little circles, each with a dot inside, surrounded with a zigzag line, designate the swollen seed, in accordance with the Neolithic early farmers' symbolism, while the zigzag represents water. This design is an ideograph of a prayer for water to irrigate an area under grain crops. It is likely that the portrayal of the snake with dots or little circles outside its body derives from this ideograph, the oldest of known designs of the kind.

Indo-European tribes, conquering early farming groups, absorbed the art of the latter. However, the semantics of the new ornamental forms was alien to the Indo-Europeans, who interpreted these designs in their own way. The Neolithic farmers worshiped a deity in the image of a serpent, whereas, as can be assumed, early Indo-Europeans venerated the sun. The pattern combining zigzags and little circles could be perceived by them as expressing a confrontation between the snake and the sun, i.e., the struggle between rival deities symbolizing the struggle between the conflicting peoples.

This can be seen from the Bronze Age designs dating after the Neolithic, such as those in Figures 133: 6, where the snake skirts disks, and 133: 4, where the elements adjacent to the zigzag cannot represent snakeskin spots or swollen seed; these are typical Bronze Age solar signs.

The zigzag/wave, then, designates a river, water, or snake symbolizing the deity of the nether regions and terrestrial waters.



Fig. 134. 8-shaped sign in Daghestan: 1 — carved stone, Kandik; 2 — fragment of woman's silver adornment, ca 1700; 3 — figure from rock wall paintings near Chirkata [141, p. 101].

Let us analyze another variant of the snake/water sign. Ornaments observed in Daghestan include a sign or pattern shaped like an 8 (Fig. 134: 1, 2). This is also a widespread symbol. In medieval Europe, for example, the 8-shaped sign appeared on amulets [859, Fig. 28]. An Iranian relief portraying a deer drinking water suggests that the 8-shaped sign was a conventional representation of water (Fig. 136: 1).



Fig. 135. Plait-shaped ornaments: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Barsha; 2 — Sumer, ca 3000 BC [38, pl. 51]; 3 — medieval Russia, 12th c. [473, p. 104]; 4 — Georgia, ca 1500 BC [276, pl. 89]; 5 — New Guinea [703, p. 107].



Fig. 136. Figure of 8 and plait as conventional designation of water: 1 — Iran, ca 400 CE [622, p. 182]; 2 — Assyria, ca 700 BC [215, pl. 257].

A Daghestanian rock wall painting has the 8 sign incorporated in the human figure, in all probability female (Fig. 134: 3). There is nothing extraordinary about the female image in the form of a water sign, as the goddess was the mistress of heavenly moisture.

The following two circumstances must have affected the formation of the 8 sign for water. 1) The goddess was sometimes portrayed as wasp waisted (Fig. 73: 2), because the bee was considered one of her incarnations, and also probably because her symbols included a bow-shaped sign (Fig. 324: 3). 2) The 8-shaped sign can be regarded as a reduced version of the plait-like ornamental pattern (Fig. 135). Figure 136: 2 shows that the plait motif symbolized water. The combination of this symbol with floral patterns or "knobs" (Fig. 137: 7, 8) would be semantically equivalent to the combination of the zigzag with circles or hooks (Figs. 133: 8; 131: 4), i.e., it expresses the idea of watering seeds or plants.

The plait design symbolized water because it derived from the representation of two interlacing snakes (Fig. 137: 1-5); snake and water were designated by the same wave sign, the "snake" and "water" notions being semantically similar. That the plait symbol originated from the representation of a pair of snakes can be corroborated not only by numerous examples, but also by the following characteristic feature of these two graphemes. In many cases the band forming the plait displays two lengthwise lines or a groove in the middle (Fig. 137: 7). This inner line is a rudiment of a more complete pattern containing a lengthwise sequence of "buttons" on the band (Fig. 402: 3, 4). The "buttons" derive from the dots depicted on the wavy band symbolizing the snake/water (Fig. 125: 4).

In Elam, two interlacing snakes symbolized fertility [570, p. 37]. Five thousand years later, in present-day India, this grapheme still has the same meaning, for childless couples pray for children to a representation of two interlaced snakes [791, p. 408]. One might form the notion that a pair of snakes, especially interwoven, symbolized the union of the male and female principles. As a matter of fact, in India and in China the paired snakes design came to be perceived as a symbol of the sexual urge [754, p.

36]. However, this train of thought is probably misleading. The snake image in mythology and cult symbolism is consistently associated with the male principle; data on the female double of this image are rare.

The oldest known plait design (Fig. 137: 9) contains two dots within loops, which can be understood as a conventional expression of duality. It would perhaps be unwise to class the representations of two snakes in the same category as other dual symbols of the Neolithic earth deity (Fig. 294), because this leaves unexplained the specific meaning of the grapheme as a fertility symbol. Most likely, the pair of snakes symbolized twins; both mythology and symbolism offer evidence of divine twins, sons of the goddess; their father is the goddess' spouse, the earth god seen as a serpent. For example, an Assyro-Babylonian myth relates that Apsu (this name resembles that of the Egyptian bull Apis) and Tiamath, who produced twin-snakes, were the progenitors of mankind [678, p. 11]. Myths of various peoples incorporate an ethnographi-

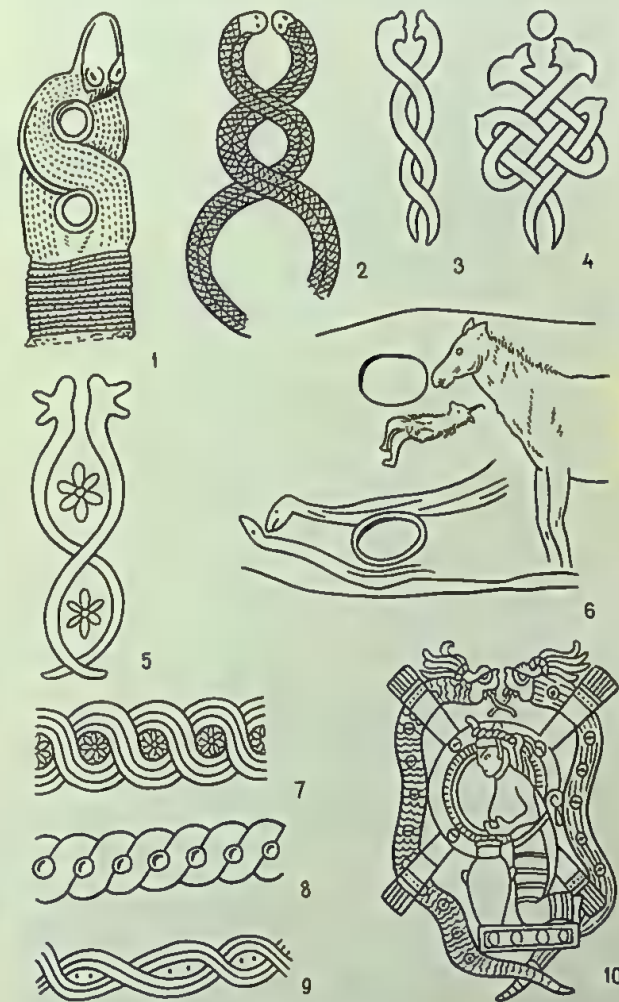


Fig. 137. Pair of snakes: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [762, p. 29]; 2 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [636, p. 93]; 3 — India [754, pl. 9]; 4 — Armenia, ca 1000 CE [144, p. 206]; 5 — Egypt, ca 4000 BC [794, pl. 48]; 6 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 66]; 7, 8 — Mesopotamia, ca 800 BC [849, pls. 76, 79]; 9 — Elam, ca 4000 BC [791, p. 405]; 10 — pre-Columbian America [656, p. 51].

cally recorded notion that a woman who gives birth to twins has a gift of extraordinary fertility. Two snakes, the goddess' twins, therefore symbolized fertility. The snakes

interlace because they are portrayed in a wave-like aspect (Fig. 133: 1), so that a combined representation of two snakes produced the plait-like design.

POLYSEMANTIC TRIANGLE



Fig. 138. Triangles in Daghestan architectural decor: 1 — figured masonry; 2 — carved stone; 3 — engraved stone; 4 — fireplace moulding.

Various types of triangles are common in Daghestanian architectural ornamentation (Fig. 138). In recent, especially 19th to early 20th century decoration, the triangle is merely an ornamental motif. Yet this figure once had specific semantics.

Such an elementary grapheme could certainly emerge independently in different places, and convey different meanings.

The sequence of shaded triangles between two horizontal lines on a Paleolithic horse representation (Fig. 139: 1) probably designated a battue enclosure and was made as magic for ensuring a successful hunt. However, it cannot be ruled out that these triangles had the same meaning as a grapheme of similar appearance in later periods (Fig. 11: 5, 8), in other words, that even so long ago they were cloud signs and a symbol of the heaven goddess. This grapheme on the animal's body could be a supplication to the goddess to favor a hunting expedition. Or if the

stallion in this Paleolithic design is not a hunting object but rather a mythological personage, the design expresses the idea usual in the cult conceptions analyzed in this book: a relationship between the male and female principles. Two sequences of triangles, also dating from the Paleolithic (Fig. 139: 2), may well be a dual symbol of the heaven goddess.

In Christianity, the triangle served as a symbol of God, of the "all-seeing eye" (Fig. 139: 3). In this case, sun rays radiate from the triangle, suggesting that the figure may be originally related to solar cult symbols. This assumption is supported by another case of the triangle used in a Christian emblem: the sign in Figure 139: 4, a symbol of the Holy Trinity in the early Middle Ages, was originally a pagan symbol of three suns.¹³⁸ However, both the triangle with rays and the one with three dots stem from the symbolism of the Neolithic goddess: the triangle for the cloud, the rays for rain, the three dots for the divine trinity.

Bronze Age pottery of different parts of Europe frequently displays an ornament in the form of a sequence of triangles around the vessel's body, the apex being turned up or down (Fig. 140: 3). At that time, the semiovals or paddles from which the triangles originated, were still in use in similar compositions. As far back as the Neolithic, and perhaps also the Paleolithic, the semioval, a rain cloud sign, was transformed into the triangle. But semiovals and paddles were still in use during the Bronze Age, and they sometimes involved details which bespoke their connection with Neolithic symbolism. For example, the semioval in Figure 140: 1 encloses a sign of an area under crops, while in Figure 140: 2 a water sign can be made out. The Neolithic ornament in the form of a ring of semiovals on the vessel expressed the notion of heavenly waters. It is, however, hard to say whether it had the same or a different meaning later, or was used merely as a traditional ornament already devoid of meaning (Fig. 141).



Fig. 139. Triangles with various semantics: 1 — Western European Paleolithic [451, p. 153]; 2 — Paleolithic of North America [862, p. 453]; 3 — representation of "all-seeing eye", Russia, 17th c.; 4 — early Christian symbol of Trinity [536, p. 41].

¹³⁸ See chapter "The Holy Trinity."

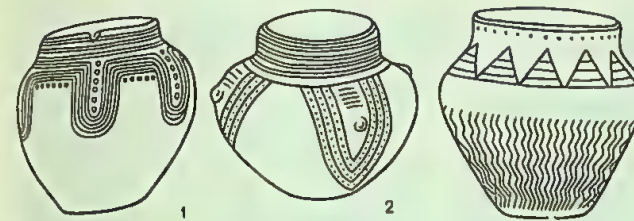


Fig. 140. Ornamentation on 2000—1000 BC pottery in Eastern Europe: 1—3 — Catacomb culture of Southern Russia [532, pl. 13, p. 157; 431, p. 81].

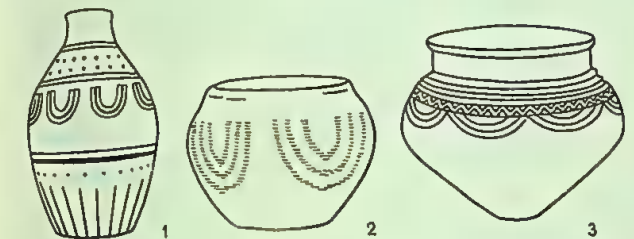


Fig. 141. Ornamentation on Bronze Age pottery: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [632, pl. 10]; 2 — Azerbaijan, ca 2000 BC [279, p. 91]; 3 — Hallstatt culture (Austria, Hungary), ca 800 BC [744, pl. 130].

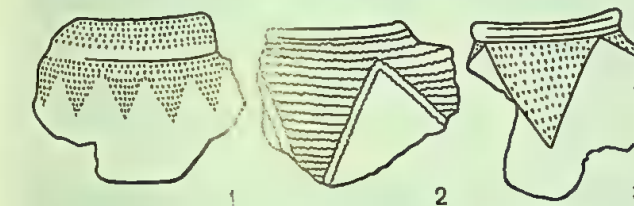


Fig. 142. Fragments of Kurgan culture pottery: 1—3 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 3000 BC [285, pp. 106, 107].

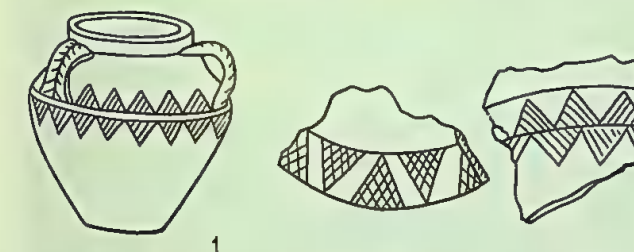


Fig. 143. Ornamentation on Western European Neolithic pottery: 1, 2 — France, ca 3000 BC [648, p. 320; 659, p. 560].



Fig. 144. Triangle with sprouts: 1 — Daghestan, elements of embroidery; 2 — Iran, ornamental element on Neolithic pottery [716, p. 32]; 3 — Crete, ca 2500 BC [416, p. 334]; 4 — Sicily, Neolithic, and Hungary, Bronze Age [830, p. 282]; 5 — Germany, Neolithic [719, p. 275]; 6 — Greece, Neolithic [830, p. 209]; 7 — Greece, Neolithic [830, p. 209]; 8 — Central Asia, Bronze Age [499, p. 225].

The ornament of a girdle of triangles belongs among the rare examples of symbols which decorated clay vessels of the Kurgan culture in the third millennium B.C. (Fig. 142). Even then, in the initial period of expansion of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, it was borrowed by the latter from their neighbor Neolithic farmers, or from aborigines whose territories they conquered. Questions arise in this connection: was it adopted as decoration or as symbol? If a symbol, what did it symbolize? If it retained its original semantics, what did it have to do with the religious and mythological system of Proto-Indo-Europeans and later Indo-Europeans of the Bronze Age among whom it was a favorite ornamental motif? These questions remain unanswered.

The girdle of triangles around the top of the vessel, common among the tribes of the Kurgan culture in the Dnieper and Volga steppes, was continued by tribes of the string-ceramics (or battle-axe) culture which occupied the territory from the Volga to the Rhine around 2000 B.C.; it remained popular in subsequent cultures on this territory until the middle of the first millennium B.C.

In the Western European Neolithic, as already mentioned, variants of the ornament were used in the form of triangles with apexes turned in different directions (Fig. 143). The ornament disappeared in the Bronze Age.

In some Daghestanian ornaments triangles seem to designate mountains (Fig. 144: 1). Such an interpretation of this motif may be correct, because the Hittites used the triangle, also elongated, as a sacred sign to designate a mountain [615, p. 77]. If we take into account the cross and the multi-pointed star which sometimes appear at the top of Daghestanian triangles, this particular symbol may be indicative of sun veneration. Whatever the case may be, the cross used to be a symbol of the earth god in the Neolithic religion, and the notion of the sacred mountain as the center of the world was associated with the cult of this deity.

Triangles with a different type of appendages are also encountered in ancient symbolism (Fig. 144: 2-7). These sprouts next to the triangle may be signs of plants, and shading in the form of parallel stripes with dots (Fig. 144: 5) in all probability designates furrows and a field under crops. It seems that the triangle here represents a plot of cultivated land, rather than a mountain. A triangle with a zigzag inside was an ancient Hebrew divine symbol [730a, p. 667]. It is a sign of earth irrigated by water or a cloud containing moisture. Indeed, the triangle with plant appendages could designate a rain cloud (see Fig. 36: 3; Fig. 144: 8 is analogous to this design). Not infrequently, a triangle resembling a stylized representation of a mountain may be shaded with chevrons (Fig. 144: 3, 6) which must have derived from concentric semiovals, i.e., from the typical cloud symbol. When the triangle is shaded with parallel lines and dots, i.e., with representations of furrows and seed, the composition can be classified as earth within a cloud (cf. Fig. 15: 6). Thus, the triangle with extensions may be regarded as the sign of earth with vegetation (the mountain or the schematic representation of a triangular plot of land appears here as a symbol of the earth deity), or as a cloud sign in combination with a sign of vegetation watered by heavenly moisture. In the

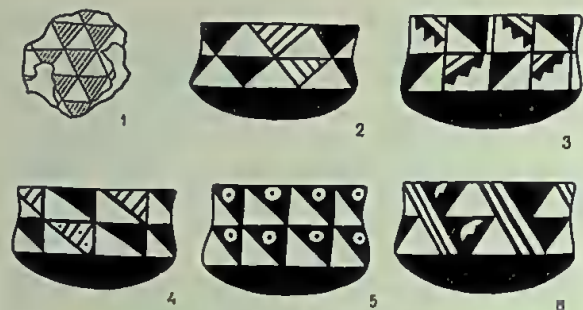


Fig. 145. Triangle ■ sign of cultivated land: 1 — France, ca 3000 BC [659a, p. 560]; 2—6 — Asia Minor, 6000—4000 BC [765b, pp. 311, 287, 285, 289, 277].

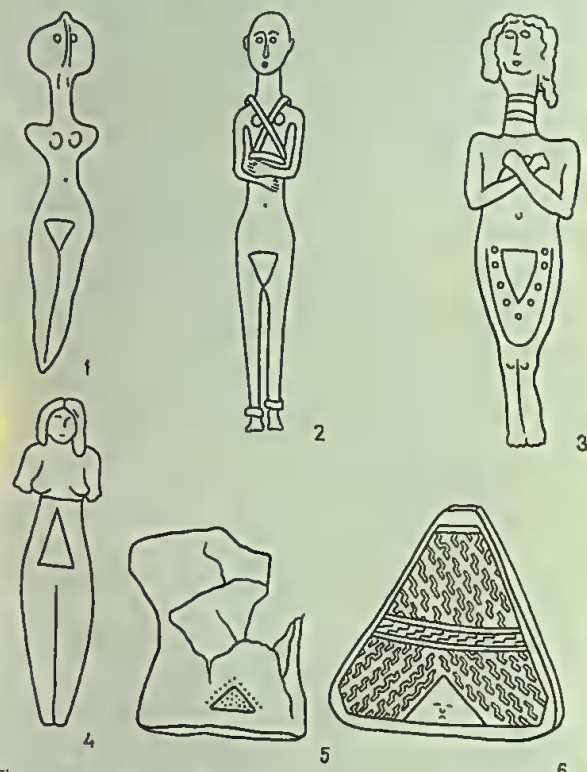


Fig. 146. Triangle ■ female sign: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [414, p. 172]; 2 — Hittite [215, pl. 212]; 3 — Troy [824, p. 380]; 4 — Ancient Egypt; 5 — Northern Caucasus, ca 1500 BC [327, p. 31]; 6 — Hungary, Neolithic [679, p. 123].

latter case the symbol expresses an appeal to the heaven goddess to produce rich crops. These kinds of symbols evolved in the early Neolithic (Figs. 12, 15, 16). There is no way of knowing what they meant in the Bronze Age, but it was quite probably the same as in the Neolithic.

In a number of cases the triangle is most certainly intended ■ ■ earth symbol. Some examples have already been referred to (Figs. 15: 2; 117: 3, 4). There are also others. A Southern Caucasian Bronze Age design (Fig. 158: 2) depicts ■ bull-moon in the sky; the triangle under it does not represent a mountain, as one might expect, but, divided into stripes, it is an earth symbol (cf. Fig. 144: 5).

Neolithic pottery from Asia Minor is decorated with a variety of designs supporting the assumption that the

triangle could in fact symbolize the earth (Fig. 145). One can see simple shaded triangles alongside triangular shapes with serration symbolizing tilled soil, stripes designating furrows, furrows and dots for grain, ■ dot within ■ circle designating ■ swollen seed, and finally, with conventional designations of plants. The triangular configuration of the earth symbol could be due to the fact that cultivated land was not necessarily quadrangular, it could also be triangular in terraced agriculture on mountain slopes.

As follows from numerous images, the triangle could be a sign of femininity (Fig. 146). It symbolizes woman among Brazilian Indians [360, p. 43]. Mothers in the Altai carried little sacks containing their children's umbilical cords at their waist; those with girls' umbilical cords were marked with triangular symbols. The triangle as a sign of femininity dates back to the Paleolithic.

It is of interest that in this particular meaning the sign was not infrequently placed upside down (Fig. 146: 4-6), which suggests that it was not merely a naturalistic representation of the female sex organ, but a symbol. As a symbol of the goddess, it was associated with her other symbol, also triangular — the rain cloud sign. This is attested by cases where dots designating seed were combined with the rain cloud sign along the sides of the triangle on the goddess' figure (Fig. 146: 3, 5; cf. Fig. 13: 4).

In another remarkable case, the entire figure of the goddess is triangular (Fig. 146: 6). This is undoubtedly a female figure, since a female generative organ with the face of a baby being born is depicted in its lower part. Ancient art has left other specimens of the female figure portrayed as a triangular body; sometimes dots are placed around the triangle [719, pp. 49, 197, 559]. The triangular shape of the female figure could be the result of schematizing the silhouette of a woman wearing ■ wide robe, but it is more likely that the artist proceeded from the symbol of the goddess.



Fig. 147. Chevrons as female sign: 1 — Ukraine, Bronze Age [117, pl. 6]; 2 — Northwestern Caucasus, Bronze Age [331, p. 127]; 3—5 — Ukraine, Paleolithic [703, pl. 101; 184, p. 51].



Fig. 148. Daghestan; triangular stones, niches and apertures.

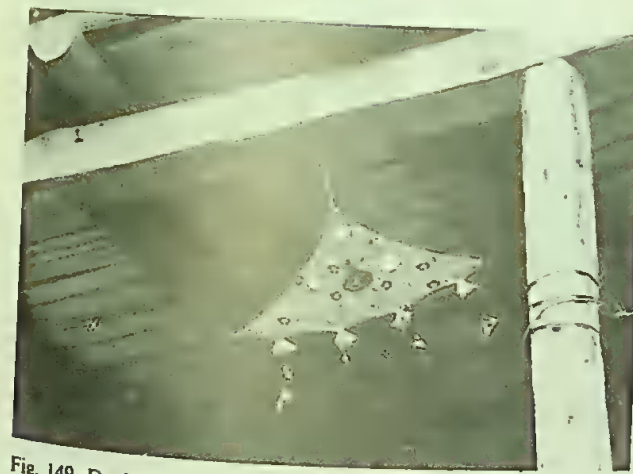


Fig. 149. Daghestan; triangular talisman on ■ house.

A chevron angle, usually in multiple sequences (Fig. 147: 1, 2), was another sign of femininity. Chevrons decorate Paleolithic cult objects from Mezin (the Ukraine), which are stylizations of the female figure (Fig. 147: 3). The chevrons on one of the Mezin statuettes appear in pairs (Fig. 147: 4). A comparison of this statuette with another on which they occur where they belong (Fig. 147: 5) shows that these signs are a conventional representation of female breasts. A pair of chevrons with downward apexes in Sumerian hieroglyphs derived from the representation of female breasts and served as an ideograph of the notion 'mother' [27, p. 63].

Chevrons and triangles were not merely signs of femininity. They were symbols of the Great Goddess, the patroness of life and death. For this reason they appear on a tomb wall (Fig. 147: 2) alongside zigzags. The latter, designations

of the serpent, were also of chthonic significance in this case.

It is possible that the arc as ■ cloud sign was transformed into ■ paddle or an angular shape not only because rounded outlines were prone to change into angular ones, but also, perhaps even primarily, because the paddle and the angle, whose shape resembled female breasts, were symbols of the goddess, identical to the cloud sign in this respect.

In some cases, the triangular detail in architectural decoration was architectural-construction in origin.

There is a decorative detail in vernacular Daghestanian architecture in the form of a large triangle with the apex pointing upward. It is made as ■ special stone in the masonry, or a recess or aperture in ■ wall (Fig. 148). Triangular talismans are hung on the house while it is being built (Fig. 149); this confirms the assumption that the triangle is associated with reverence towards the dwelling.

The origin of this detail may be judged by the fact that it often occurs above a door or a window (Fig. 150). It is likely that in this case the triangle results when the aperture is finished overhead with the overlapping of masonry layers (Fig. 151). It would seem that this archaic method of roofing doorway and window openings prompted the Cretan triangular hieroglyph designating 'door.' The sign was assimilated in the Phoenician alphabet, where it was pronounced *daleth* ('door'; hence the Greek letter *delta*).

The triangle may have been common above entrances to dwellings, and so came to symbolize home, dwelling. Indeed, the entrance does symbolize the dwelling in a special way, which finds expression in some languages. The Georgian word *darbazi* ('hall, house') initially meant 'door, passage'; the Hebrew *heder* ('room') stems from the notion 'to enter.' Nevertheless, it should be considered that the triangle was an earth symbol, and that the earth god was a patron of the human dwelling.



Fig. 150. Daghestan; decorative triangles over apertures: 1 — Kishtsha; 2 — Urada.



Fig. 151. Triangular shapes formed by overlapping masonry stones: 1 — Daghestan, Kishtsha, 19th c.; 2, 3 — view of a door aperture from façade and from interior, Checheno-Ingushetia, 18th c.; 4 — entrance to a tomb, Mycenae, 15th c. BC; 5 — entrance to Mycenaean acropolis, ca 1500 BC; 6 — architectural fragment, Ancient Mexico [751, p. 53].

EARTH, MOUNTAIN, AND THE MAGIC NET

Vernacular architecture in Daghestan used decorative motifs featuring various combinations of square and rhombic shapes (Fig. 152).

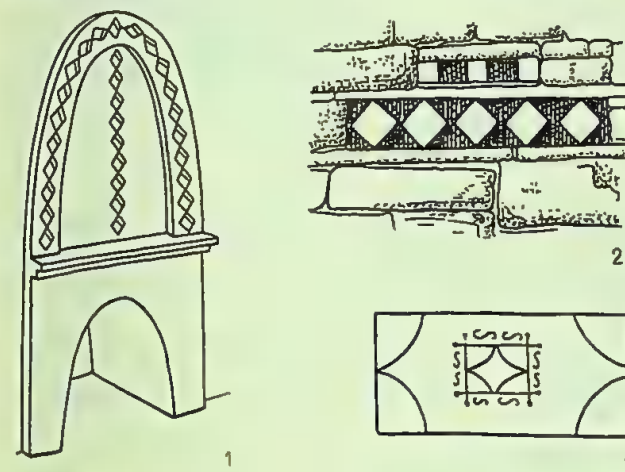


Fig. 152. Rhombus in Daghestan architectural decor: 1 — fireplace moulding; 2 — figured masonry; 3 — engraved stone.

The rhombic ornament emerged as far back as the Paleolithic. A theory concerning its origin is based on the fact that the dentine of the mammoth tusk exhibits a rhomboid reticular pattern when cut. B. Bibikova believes that the appearance of the mammoth ivory in section was a source of various patterns: rhombic, zigzag, even meandering [64]. B. Rybakov shares this opinion: "Primitive man saw widespread bone images of foremothers covered with natural rhombic patterns, intrinsic in the very structure of the tusk from which the sacred figurine was carved. Thus, the rhombic pattern combined two essential notions, as they were perceived by the primitive hunter: that of the mammoth (source of life, satiation, and well-being) and the sacred female image (the symbol of fertility, proliferation, and consanguinity). The rhomb and the rhombic meander became symbols of vitality and well-being in their own right, the very first ideographs of Life and Welfare in the history of human thought" [472, pp. 128, 129].

This interpretation of the origin and meaning of the Paleolithic rhomboid pattern raises some doubts. The pattern is characteristic of the Franco-Cantabrian part of the Eurasian Paleolithic culture region, but not of the entire region. It is absent in Siberia and Central Europe, while in the Ukraine it figures as rhomboid meanders rather than rhombuses. At the same time, for the Paleolithic tribes of France and Spain where Paleolithic rhombic ornaments have been found the mammoth was of much less significance as a basic commodity than it was for the inhabitants of the region from the Ukraine to Siberia. Also, the cult objects in the Franco-Cantabrian Paleolithic, for which the rhombic ornament is typical, were generally carved from stone or deer antlers, rather than mammoth bone. Moreover, no female statuettes have been found

from the time to which examples of the rhombic ornament can be dated, the Magdalenian period.

A variety of rhombic patterns were carried out in the Paleolithic: reticular, double (inscribed), and with a dot inside; the rhomboid shapes quite frequently formed sequences (Fig. 153). There are no grounds for attributing them to the structure of mammoth ivory.

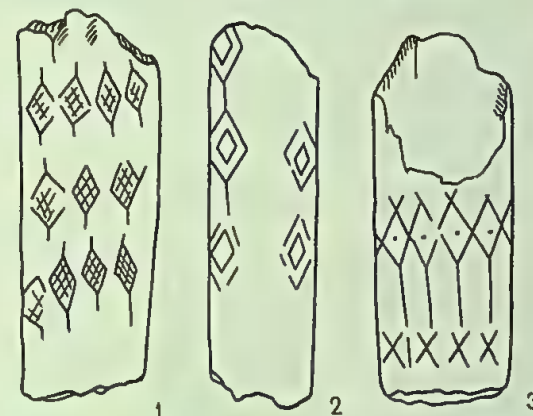


Fig. 153. Rhomboid patterns in Paleolithic art: 1—3 — France [659a, p. 231].

Such rhombic designs and their arrangement in chains reappeared thousands of years later, in the Neolithic. They may have been common in the Mesolithic as well, but were probably made on short-lived materials. It is hard to imagine a secondary independent emergence of absolutely identical designs; there must have been a continuity between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic in this respect (and not only in this). It still remains to be learned what the rhombic ornament meant in the Paleolithic.

It is generally considered certain that the rhombic sign in popular and ancient ornamental art derives from a conventional representation of a plot of cultivated land and is a symbol of the earth. The ancient Egyptians, for example, pictured the earth as square in shape; the quadrangle and the circle symbolized earth and heaven respectively in Ancient China; even now, the rhombus is considered a male and the circle a female sign in Eastern Asian ornamentation (China, Mongolia); ancient Greeks and Romans kindled two sacred fires, square and round, symbolizing the earthly and the celestial fires. The Abkhazians baked square-shaped ritual bread (the gift of earth) [10, p. 104]. The square is a symbol of death in Christianity [730b, p. 1486]; this may be because the Neolithic earth god was also the god of death, and the dead were deposited in the earth.

Dots within a rhombus (Fig. 154) are probably seed in a field. That the rhombus with a dot symbolized earth and crops has been suggested by A. Ambroz [20, pp. 11, 22], B. Rybakov [468a, p. 26], and M. Gimbutas [696, p. 205]. This interpretation is confirmed by the context

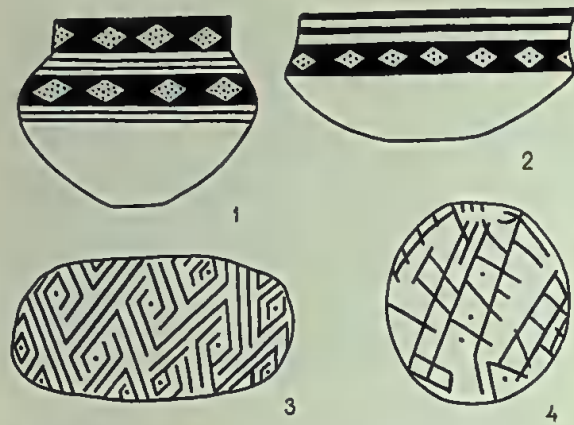


Fig. 154. Rhombus with dots ■ conventional designation of sowed land: 1—3 — Asia Minor, 7000—4000 BC [764a, p. 59; 762, pl. 121]; 4 — Bulgaria, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 212].

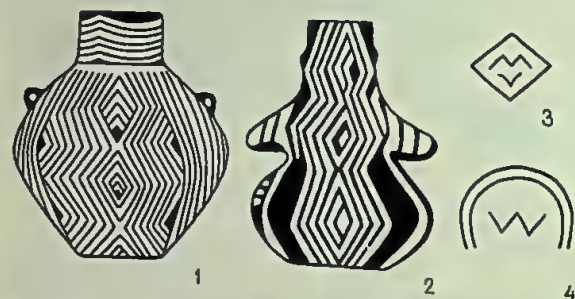


Fig. 155. Earth and vegetation irrigated by heavenly moisture: 1—4 — Asia Minor, 6000—4000 BC [764a, p. 63; 764b, pp. 525, 407, 417].

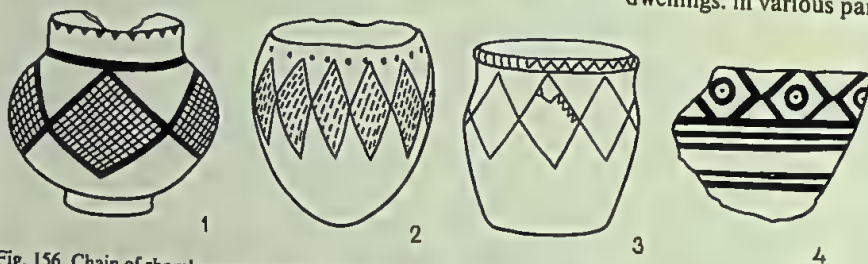


Fig. 156. Chain of rhombuses on ancient pottery: 1 — Aegean culture, ca 3000 BC [72, p. 23]; 2 — Kurgan culture, Northern Black Sea region, ca 2500 BC [352, fig. 7]; 3 — Log-frame culture, Ukraine, ca 1000 BC [548, p. 141]; 4 — Iran, ■ 4000 BC [652, p. 11].

of the compositions in which the sign occurs.

Neolithic pottery from Asia Minor is often decorated with a chain of rhombuses accompanied by zigzags (Fig. 155: 1, 2); this is evidently an incantation to ensure water for crops in the field. The W sign within ■ rhombus (Fig. 155: 3) seems to designate terrestrial vegetation, while the W within a semioval (Fig. 155: 4) means plants watered by heavenly moisture. Still, in these two cases the W-shaped sign, being ■ reduced zigzag, could also symbolize water.

A sequence of rhombuses was a favorite design in antiquity. Originating in the Paleolithic, it acquired agricultural semantics in the Neolithic (Fig. 156: 1, 4), was assimilated by Proto-Indo-Europeans of the Northern Black Sea region (Fig. 156: 2), continued in use during the Bronze Age (Fig.

156: 3), and remained in use as ■ decorative motif in Daghestan until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is unlikely that the design originated as a purely compositional arrangement. As a mere ornament, it would not have endured over thousands of years. For instance, a chain of rhombuses resembling ■ magic formula rather than an ornament, can be observed on an elk representation from Siberia, from the first half of the first millennium B.C. [33e, p. 177].

Ever since the Neolithic, round and square plan sanctuaries and houses were common in the Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and Asia Minor. Cult symbolism inspired the round shape of some ancient structures, the circle being ■ heaven sign. Of course, this alone would be insufficient to account for the round shape of buildings, for it could have been suggested, as appeared in various places, by the elementary architectural and building knowhow of primitive technologies. The latter consideration, however, does not apply to square buildings. The shape was indeed associated with specific building methods, but these could have been dictated by a prescribed square plan. Square living quarters are not particularly convenient, yet the tradition of square houses has survived thousands of years; in the Caucasus it lasted till the Middle Ages, in the Pamirs until the turn of the 20th century. It is noteworthy that in Western Europe, where the square as a sacred symbol was less popular than in Western Asia, there were no square dwellings, save for the Mediterranean region. The symbolic meaning attached to the configuration of the plan of structures influenced the architecture of religious buildings to ■ much greater extent than that of dwellings: in various parts of the region extending from the

Mediterranean to Central Asia, ancient temples were often round or square in plan. The symbolic meaning of these configurations is presently known in individual cases only; for example, in China, which borrowed certain elements of the Neolithic religion from Western Asia, the temple dedicated to heaven is circular, whereas the earth temple is square.

The shape of the dwelling house, mausoleum, and mosque, square in plan and domed, could have derived from the symbolic meanings of the square and circle. Indeed, much more practical than a square, both functionally and in terms of construction, is an elongated structure covered with ■ vault (commonly found in the same regions). There are also structures of more sophisticated configuration incorporating cult symbols in plan: a square with an inscribed cross, a cross, a square with projections on the sides forming a cross. B. Brentjes presents a number of such examples in his monograph and concludes that symbolism inspired the choice of shape for these structures. He recounts ■ myth of the god Yima, creator and initial



Fig. 157. "Flourishing rhombus": 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Kubachi; 2, 3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, pp. 401, 411].



Fig. 158. Male symbol on woman's belly: 1, 2 — Bulgaria and Rumania, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 206]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 202]; 4 — Rumania, ca 3000 BC [259, p. 83]; 5 — Moldavia, ca 3000 BC [696, p. 206]; 6 — Africa, ca 1950 [369, p. 38]; 7 — Yugoslavia, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 203]; 8 — Bulgaria, ca 4000 BC [719, p. 319].

lord of the world in Iranian mythology, who built a "world castle," square in plan [637, p. 10]. It will be shown below that the image of Iranian Yima is related to the more archaic earth god.

One encounters different variants of the pattern consisting of a square or rhombus with shoots at the corners in the ornaments of many peoples. Designs of this kind first appeared in the Neolithic of Asia Minor (Fig. 83: 2). In Figure 157: 2, the rhombus with zigzags represents irrigated land, and the shoots at its corners symbolize vegetation for rain. The meaning of ■ carved stone from Daghestan (Fig. 157: 1) becomes clear in the light of this assumption: the "flourishing square" designates earth, the cross within a circle — the sun; the combination of these symbols expresses the idea of fertility, because according to notions that emerged during the Bronze Age, the sun god impregnates Mother Earth. Another interpretation of this design is as follows: the rhombus is the symbol of the male earth deity, the circle is the symbol of the female deity of

heaven. These semantics will be shown to be ■ alternative interpretation of the circle with an inscribed cross.

A. Ambroz draws the conclusion that the "rhombus with hooks" symbolized fertility and that "judging by its position in various compositions, it could designate earth, plant, and ■ woman at the same time" [20, p. 20]. But this confusion of notions is groundless. The rhombus stands for earth, shoots for plants, and the association of this symbol with the female image stems from the fact that during the Neolithic the rhombus was depicted on female figurines, symbolizing impregnation of the goddess by the earth god (Fig. 158: 1, 2, 5), whereas in beliefs that became common during the Bronze Age, the earth designated by the rhombus was personified by the female deity.

The quadrangular earth sign is one of the few Neolithic symbols which retained their initial meaning in subsequent epochs. However, certain notions associated with the quadrangle underwent a change, specifically its "sex" has changed. Portrayals of male animals with the rhombus near the legs (Fig. 159) are encountered in Daghestan, the Southern Caucasus, and Russia. Since the Bronze Age the earth deity is female, so that the rhombus, being a sign of earth, acquired the significance of a female symbol. Occurring at the legs of ■ male animal, the rhombus was an ideograph expressing a wish for fertility.

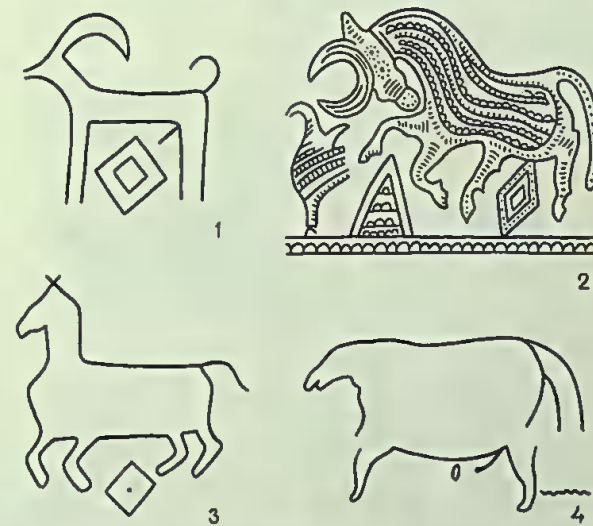


Fig. 159. Rhombus as symbol of Mother Earth: 1 — design on a stone, Daghestan, Hakvari [141, p. 104]; 2 — Georgia, Bronze Age [719, p. 429]; 3 — Russian embroidery design [19, p. 69]; 4 — Siberian rock painting [401, p. 70].

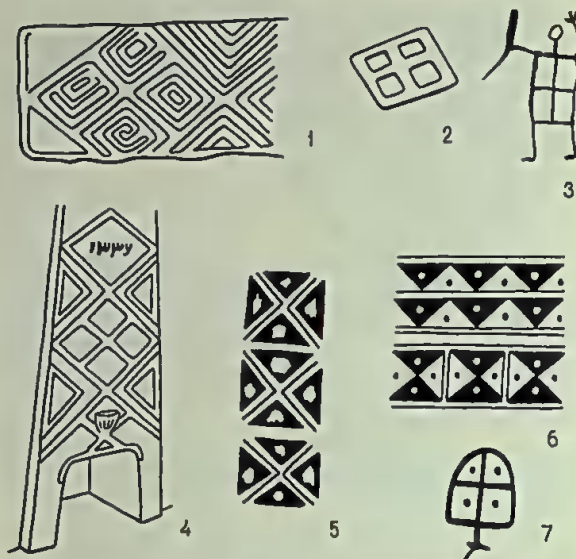


Fig. 160. Crossed rhombus: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan; 2 — sign on pottery, Daghestan, ca 3000 BC [262, p. 31]; 3 — rock painting in Italy [619, p. 136]; 4 — fireplace moulding, Daghestan; 5, 6 — wall paintings in sanctuaries, Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [762, pl. 36, p. 82]; 7 — rock wall painting, Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [763, p. 78].



Fig. 161. Rhombus interwoven with cross: 1 — design on a stone, Daghestan, Kubachi, and a picture on an Ancient Cretan artifact [867, p. 179]; 2 — detail of a door frame, Moscow Kremlin, 17th c.; 3 — element of Tibetan ornament [750, pl. 20].

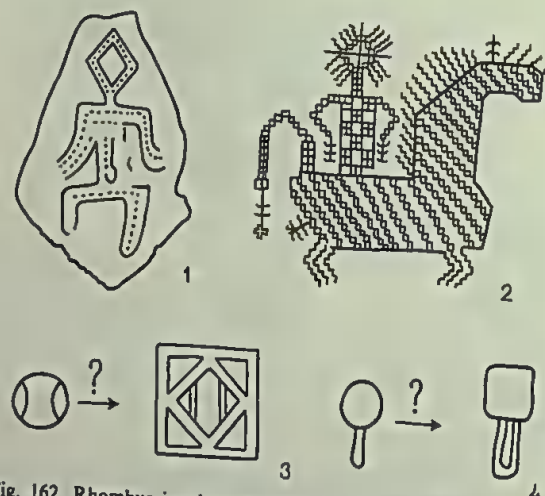


Fig. 162. Rhombus in place of circle: 1 — North Ossetia [537, p. 316]; 2 — Volga region, 19th c. [342, p. 79]; 3 — Russia, Middle Ages [239, pl. 31]; 4 — Karelia, Neolithic [443, pl. 23].

But during the Neolithic, the earth deity was male. Rhombic signs are not infrequently discerned on the belly of Neolithic female statuettes. This composition seems to mean the same as the snake sign at the same place (Fig. 158: 3, 4, 7, 8): the male deity, the earth god, impregnates the goddess, the mother of all life. The connection between the rhombus and the figure of the Great Goddess, stemming from the Neolithic, was assimilated by Christianity thousands of years later; the rhombus goes with the image of the Mother of God in Christian iconography [19, p. 66].

The sign of the crossed rhombus was used in Daghestan from the third millennium B.C. until the twentieth century (Fig. 160: 1, 2, 4). It is a very ancient symbol: in the early Neolithic it existed in different versions (Fig. 160: 5, 6). The sign of the rhombus divided into four portions meant the same in principle as the plain rhombus, judging by the fact that it was placed on the belly of the female figure, like other emblems of the Neolithic male deity (Fig. 158: 5, 6).

Rock wall paintings in Northern Italy include a human figure with a rectangular body intersected by an upright cross (Fig. 160: 3). The context of the general composition suggests that this is a priest performing a religious rite at an altar. Priests used to employ symbols of the deity they worshiped as accessories in their attires and even tried to imitate the external appearance of the deity, as they pictured it. It appears that the crossed square is not simply a designation of earth, but a symbol of the earth deity.

There is an opinion, perhaps justified, that a square divided into four sections by a cross is a conventional representation of the "four fields of the earth," while dots in these quarters, like dots in a plain rhombus, designate a field under crops [468a, p. 26; 471, p. 402]. In the ancient Chinese hieroglyphic system, the sign of a square divided by a cross into four sections was an ideograph of the notion "field, cultivated land" [827, p. 51]. According to ancient conceptions, the earthly world consisted of four regions.¹³⁹ There was a Belorussian rite of consecrating a place where a house was to be built: a crossed square with dots in the quarters was drawn on the ground [475, p. 42]; this reflects the notion of the earth god as patron of the home.

Symbols in the form of a square or rhombus intersected by an upright or oblique cross are most probably equivalent.

A sign in the form of a square divided into four triangles by an oblique cross with dots (Fig. 160: 5, 6) existed in Asia Minor as early as the seventh millennium B.C. Designs on Neolithic pottery from Asia Minor show that the triangle, including that containing a dot, designated earth (Fig. 145); consequently, four triangles arranged crosswise belong in the category of four-partite earth symbols.

The peculiar design of a rhombus interwoven with a cross (Fig. 161) could have derived from the crossed rhombic pattern. This grapheme is similar in composition to the commonly known diagram of a disk with a cross. It may have derived from the latter as a result of the transformation of the circle into a square.

¹³⁹See chapter "The Four Directions."



Fig. 163. Lattice and chessboard pattern: 1 — grave stela, Daghestan, ca 1900; 2 — medieval tomb, Chechenia [797, pl. 8]; 3 — Russia, ca 1200 [471, p. 405]; 4 — Daghestan, ca 1000 BC [264, p. 19]; 5 — France, Neolithic [659, p. 560]; 6 — Ancient India [617, p. 53].

This transformation is not at all improbable (Fig. 162: 3, 4). Yet if a rhombic figure occasionally appeared instead of the disk, this was not because the rhombus was easier to carry out technically than the circle. It must be a revival of the old notion that the earth god symbolized by the rhombus was once a male deity, like the sun god of the Bronze Age. There exist isolated examples of the disk-to-rhombus transformation, but this by no means implies that the rhombus is equivalent to the disk and has always been a solar symbol, as concluded by E. Kletnova [239, pp. 9, 17]. A. Ambroz, objecting to speculations on the substitution of the rhombus for the circle in decorative art, writes: "People tend to overlook the fact that the rhombus and all its variants were used in ornamentation of primitive pottery along with the circle, and that they were different symbols" [19, p. 61].

The sign of a latticed rhombus or square is frequently encountered, sometimes patterned like a chessboard (Figs. 163: 404: 3). It served as a talisman in medieval Western Europe [246, p. 16]. S. Tolstov believes that in ancient Central Asia the latticed sign designated supplication to the patron spirits of the home [523, p. 73], for it allegedly designated 'home' in the oldest characters of India [127, p. 26]. If the earth god was regarded as a patron of the dwelling, and houses were built on a foundation configured like the symbol of that god, his symbol could be used to express the notion 'home.'

The grapheme of a latticed rhombus or square most likely designates the same thing as the plain rhombus or square, i.e., the earth. The Indian representation of the latticed rectangle on which a tree grows (Fig. 163: 6) is evidence that this sign designated earth in India. The Daghestanian design in Figure 163: 1 features four suns rising over four sides of the earth, or four rain clouds watering the earth.

The latticed rhombus and square apparently stood for earth divided into tilled plots (see also Fig. 154: 4). This means that the communal field was divided into plots belonging to individual families from the very beginning of agricultural development, or perhaps there was no communal ownership of land in those times. The chessboard

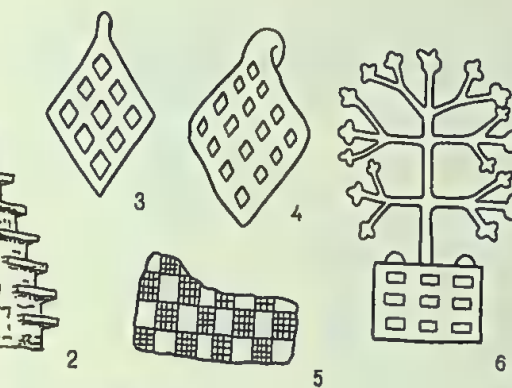


Fig. 164. Lattice and chessboard pattern on human figure: 1 — Elam, ca 4000 BC [719, p. 11]; 2 — Daghestan, rock wall painting [256, p. 73]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 49]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764, p. 195].

pattern is among the most commonly found on painted ceramics of the early farming cultures of Western Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean (Fig. 163: 5). The chessboard pattern has been supposed to symbolize earth [686, p. 366]. This may really seem to be so, but why should the little squares of the grid designating earth be decorated alternately with a certain design or be shaded?

In many cases, rectangles arranged in chessboard fashion contain alternate symbols of the earth god and the heaven goddess (Fig. 25). In Figure 164: 3, the rectangle with dots may be understood as a conventional designation of an area under crops, and the blank or clear rectangle as a conventional designation of heaven. Certain dignitaries, perhaps priests, in Ancient Peru wore checkered white and red capes; as we know, white symbolized the heaven goddess and red the earth god.

Proceeding from the above, the chessboard pattern may be regarded as an ideograph expressing the relationship between the earth god and the heaven goddess, rather than merely an earth symbol. In some cases, however, this grapheme could have had the meaning of an earth symbol, by analogy with the grid.

A human figure with uplifted hands and the body covered with a lattice design is sometimes featured on Elamite pottery (Fig. 164: 1). It is difficult to say what these figures represent judging by their external appearance alone. Female figures with such a pattern can also be seen

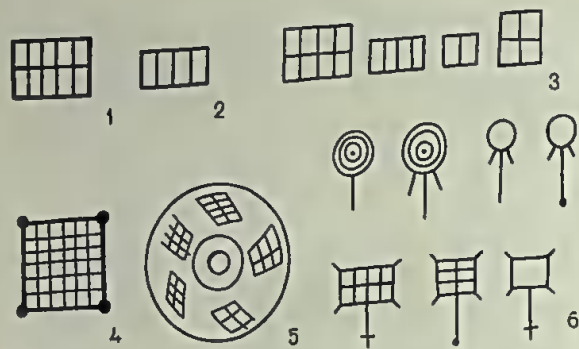


Fig. 165. Lattice as consistent cult symbol: 1 — rock wall painting near Sogratl, Daghestan; 2 — sign on 15th c. structure, Daghestan; 3 — rock wall designs, Siberia [383, p. 259]; 4 — Celtic [733, p. 157]; 5 — Troy, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 353]; 6 — rock wall designs, Spain, Bronze Age [719, p. 687].

among rock wall paintings of Daghestan (Fig. 164: 2).

A Neolithic female figurine from Asia Minor has a network sign on the legs (Fig. 164: 4). Neolithic female figures often display a certain symbol of the earth deity, not infrequently placed on the legs; in the example mentioned the grid is on the legs of a female statuette portraying the Great Goddess. The World Tree reaching its roots into the ground was an analogue of the goddess; this suggests that the grid was an earth symbol.

The grid is quite a common grapheme. Almost identical grids have been found on the walls of 15th to 18th century Daghestan buildings and among ancient rock wall paintings in Siberia (Fig. 165: 1-3). Network designs on the Trojan spinning plumb (Fig. 165: 5) are presumably earth signs placed on the heaven symbol. The spinning plumb in the form of a disk with an aperture in the center is to be considered a material emblem of the Great Goddess, as the disk, including the type with an aperture, was a heaven symbol, and the disk shape of the tool was not conditioned by its practical application (see a different, handier shape in Figure 95: 1). Implements for spinning came to have the goddess' emblem because the goddess was considered a patroness of spinning.

The extreme west of Europe was most probably not yet Indo-Europeanized during the Bronze Age (the pre-Indo-European Basque language has been preserved there to this day). The graphemes of the Iberian Peninsula, dating back to that period, must be essentially Neolithic symbols. There are representations of sacred emblems fixed on staffs (Fig. 165: 6) among Bronze Age rock wall paintings in Spain. Some of them are typical heaven symbols (the disk with concentric circles, the disk with two extensions), which apparently had not yet turned into solar symbols. Others, rectangular (including some covered with a network pattern), with shoots at the corners, are to be regarded as earth symbols. The presence of these two emblems together is evidence of a cult in which the relationship between the earth god and heaven goddess was of importance. If, on the other hand, these symbols had been adapted to Indo-European religious conceptions, they would have expressed essentially the same idea, though in a different interpretation: the relationship between sun god and earth goddess.

Consequently, the network sign is an earth symbol. In such a case, however, designs in which the grid appears on a disk (Figs. 24: 11; 71: 1) are enigmatic. Fragments of a stone slab depicting a network-patterned disk have been found in Daghestan (Fig. 166: 1). A Koban axe features an engraved latticed disk with cogs (Fig. 166: 3). It is possible that designs of this type were perceived as solar symbols in the Bronze Age, but earlier specimens must have had a different meaning.

The serrated rosette (Fig. 166: 2) could not have been a solar sign in the pre-dynasty period in Egypt; it must have been a heaven sign. In all probability the grid on it corresponds semantically to compositions in which the earth sign occurs within the rain cloud sign (Fig. 15: 6), i.e., it expresses a prayer for heavenly moisture to water the ground. This design may also be interpreted differently, as a combination of the heaven goddess and earth god symbols, expressing the relationship between the male and female principles in nature.

Latticed facing half-disks on a Mesopotamian vessel of the fifth millennium B.C. (Fig. 166: 4) cannot be placed in the category of solar symbols, because this artifact belongs to an early farming culture. It is a doubled symbol of the heaven goddess. But what does the network filling the semioval signify?

It is most unlikely that the unusual design (Fig. 166: 5) on the ceiling of a cave in the Sea of Azov region portrays the sun. However inadequate ancient people's graphic skills were, it could not have been beyond their powers to draw

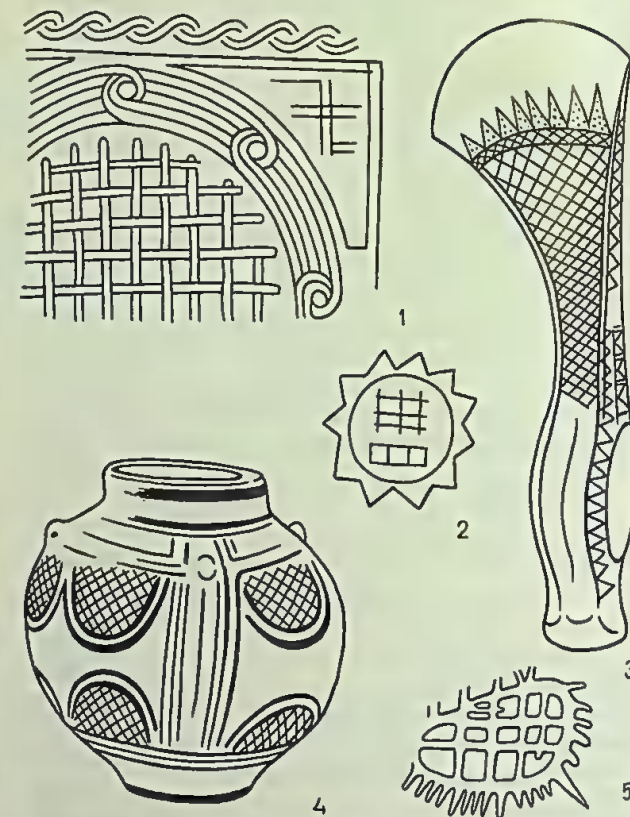


Fig. 166. Lattice in oval: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Dusrakh; 2 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [636, p. 43]; 3 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [646b, pl. 1]; 4 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [353, p. 156]; 5 — Sea of Azov region, Mesolithic [44, fig. 7].

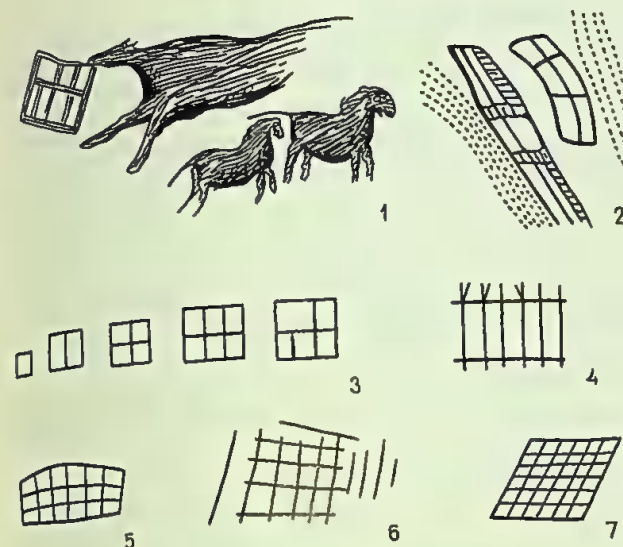


Fig. 167. Earliest lattice patterns: 1-4 — West European Paleolithic [703, pls. 185, 259; 45, p. 23]; 5 — Crete, Neolithic [676a, p. 39]; 6 — Sea of Azov region, Mesolithic [44, fig. 11]; 7 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 173].

a circular shape for the sun. The design most definitely depicts the sky, and the rays around the perimeter designate rain. That means (provided the archeologist O. Bader is not mistaken in dating this design in the Mesolithic), that the grid was drawn on the sign of heaven before the development of agriculture. If so, in this case the network is not an earth symbol.

The sign of the grid or network was known prior to the emergence of farming, and was assimilated by the Neolithic and subsequent cultures. Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic grid or network designs are encountered in Mediterranean and Black Sea areas, from Spain to the south of Russia (Fig. 167). The network design could be a representation of a fish net or a net used in animal hunting. This, however, does not imply that the sign had the elementary function of expressing a wish for a successful hunt and sufficient food. An ancient popular belief in the magic power of the net as protection from evil spirits has been recorded among many peoples, including Caucasians [593, pp. 27, 28]. It is possible that the net and related semantics were behind the emergence of the latticed rhombus as an earth symbol. Whatever the case, this sign existed before the development of agriculture (Fig. 153: 1).

The Abbe Breuil refers to the latticed signs among Paleolithic cave paintings (Fig. 167: 1-3) as "tribal emblems," though there is no evidence for such a conclusion. A. Leroi-Gourhan, another well-known scholar, for some reason saw in them representations of the female generative organ [752]. M. König believed that the reticular designs of the Paleolithic period expressed the image of the universe, having four sides, and the three-phase time conception [733, p. 136].

Most scholars hold to the opinion that Paleolithic and Mesolithic net and lattice signs were designations of hunting enclosures or other traps with the same function as representations of spears and boomerangs striking the game. Indeed, the net is sometimes shown in front of a running animal, as though expressing a wish to catch it (Fig. 167: 1). In other cases, sequences of dots may be arrayed near

the lattices, probably as a conventional representation of animal tracks (Fig. 167: 2). Finally, some lattices among Paleolithic designs obviously designate a fence (Fig. 167: 4).

The network which designated a trap could thus have become a symbol not only to ensure a successful hunt, but also good fortune in general. More likely it acquired the meaning of a symbol of some magic power.

The goddess whose image Paleolithic sculpture recorded was that magic power. As a nature goddess, the mother and mistress of animals, she was responsible for the outcome of the hunt, whether successful or a failure. If the lattice/net sign was inherited by the Neolithic from the Paleolithic as a symbol of the goddess, one can understand the graphemes presented in Figure 166.

There is direct evidence to support the assumption that the net was a symbol of the Great Goddess. The Assyro-Babylonian heaven god Ninurta was armed with a net which was called the "wild cow" [678, p. 9]. The reason is clear: the cow was an image of the heaven goddess. The ancient Greek pantheon included a goddess called Dytinna; this name is etymologically related to the Greek word for 'net'. Dytinna was identified with Artemis [787, p. 440]. But the Greek Artemis was a transformed Neolithic Great Goddess.¹⁴⁰

Consequently, if there are sufficient grounds for drawing parallels between the signs of the lattice or net on the one hand, and the image of the heaven goddess on the other, the grapheme in the form of a square, rectangle, or rhombus served as a sign of the earth in the system of Neolithic symbolism, more specifically, as an emblem of the earth god.

In preceding chapters we discussed the earth god's major position in Neolithic, and probably also in Paleolithic religious and mythological conceptions, and the high esteem in which related natural objects, such as the earth and terrestrial waters, were held. Objects of such significance also included stones, metals, mountains, and caves.

Stones could have been identified with the image of the earth god for several reasons: they lie within the ground; they are like "condensed" pieces of earth in which mythological thinking could perceive a concentration of the earthy essence, the "solid" earth, associated with the earth god's strength and power; stones could be imagined as a structural skeleton of terrestrial substance (they are referred to as "bones of the earth" in ancient legends [730b, p. 1495]). Finally, it is of no small importance that some stones produce sparks when struck, and this must have been attributed to the fiery nature of the earth god.

Numerous data indicate that the veneration of stones, which existed in Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus, is associated with the cult of the earth god and is a survival of a long forgotten religion.

Myths about the origin of mankind, recorded among aborigines of the island of New Britain (north of New Guinea) relate that a bird turned into a woman while a stone turned into a man, and these were the first people [730a, p. 212]. The myth is an echo of the Neolithic (or Paleolithic?) conception that the father and mother of

¹⁴⁰ See chapter "The Great Goddess."

the world, the Great God and the Great Goddess, were incarnated, among other things, in the bird and the stone. According to Indonesian and Oceanian traditions, the first man was given birth to by a stone [730b, p. 1495]. Soslan, an Ossetian epic hero, was born of a stone. The basis of such legends is that the progenitor of mankind was incarnated in the stone. This god-progenitor was a patron of the dead, so Norse myths maintain that the stone is the abode of the deceased's soul [730b, p. 1496].

Australian *tjurungas*, sacred stones, are the "souls of the dead." The aborigines believe that the souls of the dead, turned into stones, went down into a sacred cave to rest [669, p. 31]. The same concept was shared by Europeans twelve thousand years ago, judging by Mesolithic painted pebbles found in the Le Mas d'Azil cave (France). A fairy tale or mythological motif about a man turning into a stone is known worldwide. It is comparable to the well-known concept that man was created from earth and to earth will return.

The earth god was also considered a bestower of conception, so that barren or pregnant women in the Caucasus pray to sacred stones for a child or for safe delivery. Many peoples had a custom according to which a woman wishing to have a baby sat on a sacred stone or rubbed her belly against it [671, p. 222; 673, p. 95].

The Scriptures mention rocks producing water, or say that God can turn a stone into water. This is an obvious survival of notions inherited from times when stones and water were related in mythological consciousness. The awe inspired by the mighty and ferocious god of the nether regions led people to abandon the flint-striking method of producing sparks and to adopt the more labor-consuming wood-friction method of deriving fire. For the same reason, and also presumably because unhewn stones, which occur in nature, were believed to be incarnations of the deity, such stones were seen as sacred. The Greeks, Arabs, and Druids worshiped unhewn stones; the Torah reads that the altar must be built from unhewn stones, for "if thou layst your chisel on them, thou profanest them."

According to an old Russian legend, the stone held in an idol of Perun's hand produced sparks during thunderstorms [40c, p. 783]. Some Indo-European traditions declare that lightning results from a collision of heavenly rocks. Meteorites must have played an important role in forming the notion that the stone was an attribute of the thundergod: stones fallen from the sky must have produced an astounding impression on ancient people; for them it was manifest proof that the earth god had ascended to the sky.

In Greek mythology, Akmon is mentioned as the primeval father of the gods. The word *akmon* means 'meteorite stone', 'lightning', and 'anvil' in ancient Greek. F. M. Müller draws a parallel between the Greek *akmon* and Sanskrit *asman* ('stone', 'lightning', 'heaven') [778b, p. 508]. This etymology of the first divine father's name indicates that he was, as follows from Hittite texts, "the Weathergod of Heaven" and a patron of smithery, while the stone, in particular that of meteoritic origin, was his attribute. It is also noteworthy that the consonants *m.n* in the words *akmon* and *asman* constitute the stem of the common name Min for the earth god (this will be discussed elsewhere).

The popular association between stones and rain was almost universal [558, p. 91, 92], because the earth god made the sky pour rain. The same word designated both 'rain' and 'stone' in the Sumerian language. In Ancient Rome, people supplicating the heavens for rain carried a sacred stone in a ceremonial procession [225, p. 11].

In Sweden, until the end of the 18th century, peasants revered sacred stones, washing them every Thursday [225, p. 12] (Thursday was dedicated to the earth god). Stones were considered patrons of the harvest and cattle (the earth god's function) in Lithuania [693, p. 96].

Archeological excavations of a Neolithic settlement in Switzerland unearthed several stones wrapped in birchbark. The birch is the Great Goddess' sacred tree; therefore the combination of birchbark and stones symbolizes the relationship between the heaven goddess and the earth god, and was supposed to encourage fertility. This Neolithic find was extrapolated on a New Guinea practice. The aborigines there have magic stones which they wrap in mats and deposit in the soil during sowing; the stones remain buried till harvest time, and are then taken out and saved, to be used again [760, p. 179]. The people believed that stones had the magic power to favor soil fertility. One cannot account for such a popular belief in terms of practical experience, or from an assumption that such beliefs express popular wisdom. Popular beliefs are irrational, and attempts to interpret them rationally are misleading.

As an attribute of the earth god the stone had chthonic significance. Stones were placed in graves as far back as the Neolithic [458, p. 30]. The bottoms of graves were lined with stones in the Northern Caucasus in the third to second millennia B.C. In Russia, a custom of placing a stone in the coffin survived well into the nineteenth century. It is usual among Jews to touch the tombstone when visiting a grave; another custom consists of putting a little stone on the grave when visiting the cemetery. Observant Jews do not touch stones as well as money on Saturdays.

In Ancient Mexico, human sacrifices were crushed to death by stones during the harvest feasts [558, p. 477]. The custom of punishing criminals by stoning, which existed in pre-Columbian America as well as in the Ancient East, may be interpreted as offering a sacrifice to the earth god through his attribute, the stone.

The name of the underworld god Satan can be perceived in the Germanic *Stein*, stone. This appellation may also be compared to the Assyro-Babylonian *sedu* ('sphinx') and to the biblical *šed* ('idol'). The Karelians call "sacred stones" *seite*. Thus, the Germanic word for 'stone' is related to one of the oldest names of the earth god and goes beyond the framework of the Indo-European languages.

It has been supposed that the ethnonym *Pelasg* for the people who lived in Greece before the Hellenes derives from the pre-Indo-European **pelos* ('stone') [706, p. 26]. If so, the Pelasgians must have worshiped not just stones, but the deity they incarnate. What kind of deity it was is attested by the following: the word **pelos* almost coincides with the Greek *phallos*, Latin *pālus*, the phallus being an attribute of the earth god.

The association between the stone and the earth god must be very old, considering that an echo of it reached

Tasmania: the Tasmanian *teroon* for 'stone' may be paralleled by the Latin *terra* ('earth'), and both these words may be compared to the name of the earth god **t.r.*

Other linguistic data, too, point to an association between the stone and the image of the earth god. The Nostratic **karā* ('rock') coincides with the Nostratic **karā* ('burn, bake') [210a, p. 340]. The Greek *kranaōs* ('hard, stony, baked') almost coincides with *Kronos*; this name is also similar to the Greek *keranos* ('lightning').¹⁴¹ The ancient Georgian word for Saturday was *kronos* [143, p. 193] (Saturday was the day dedicated to the underworld god¹⁴²).

Starting from the sixth millennium B.C., the earth sign in Asia Minor Neolithic symbolism often appeared in the form of several rhombuses or squares inscribed within one another (Fig. 157: 3; 84: 6; 83: 3). This variant of the symbol continued in use during the Bronze Age (Fig. 159: 2). The following suggestion may be made concerning the origin of this grapheme. The design resembles the plan of a step pyramid, a ziggurat. In Mesopotamia the ziggurat was considered the image of a certain sacred mountain located at the center of the world. A structure representing the "center of the world" could serve as an earth symbol. The ziggurat and the pyramid in general are believed to be "architectural images of the mountain, its analogues" [371, p. 314]. According to Urartu texts, a structure called *burgana* was erected in front of temples; this word is similar to the Armenian *burg* for 'pyramid' [398, p. 3]. *Burg*, *berg* mean 'mountain' in Indo-European languages. It may be concluded from this that ancient pyramids did symbolize mountains.

The Greek word *pyramid* is related to *pyr* ('fire') which almost coincides with the Persian *pir* ('old man'), Hittite *pir* ('home'), Daghestanian *pir* ('holy place'), all these words being semantically associated with the image of the earth god. *Pār* is the Hebrew for 'bull,' the creature that represented earth; *p.r* is also the root of other Hebrew words mythologically connected with the image of the earth god: *pere* ('wild ass'), *para* ('to bear fruits'), *perah* ('flower').

Ziggurats were constructed in Sumer near temples of the moon god who should be regarded as a version of the bull-moon image. Consequently, this structure was, indeed, related in origin to the cult of the Neolithic earth god. Egyptian step pyramids are in fact funerary structures; it seems perfectly reasonable that tombs should be shaped like a symbol of the underworld god. Step pyramids of Cambodia and Mexico were built at the intersection of avenues oriented east-west and north-south; a rectangular area intersected crosswise, with a "sacred mountain" at the center, is a mythological model of the world.

The Aztec name for the sacred step pyramid was "snake hill" [780, p. 475]. Numerous medieval tombs of the Northern Caucasus are square in plan and have a step-pyramid roof crowned with a spire-like stone (perhaps a spear, a symbol of the earth god) or with a stone spheroidal at the top (a phallic symbol of the earth god?). Similar tombs exist in Syria and Palestine; this was the design of

¹⁴¹ V. Ivanov is of the opinion that the Greek appellation for lightning, *keranos*, was tabooistic, deliberately distorted from the root *p.r*. This is hardly so: in addition to the examples quoted, there are many other terms with the root *k.r* associated with the earth god.

¹⁴² See chapter "The Black God."

Mausolus' tomb in Halicarnassus in Asia Minor. A phallic symbol of the "lord of the world" crowned Cambodian step pyramids [780, p. 484].

The Mesopotamian ziggurats, the Egyptian pyramids, and the step-pyramid structures of Cambodia and Mexico are widely separated in space and were erected at different periods. Their common origin thus seems most unlikely. This could be a matter of debate if it concerned the borrowing of the shape of an architectural structure as such. The structures, however, are embodiments of a religious conception, and this conception was materialized not only in architecture. The notion of a sacred mountain rising in the center of the world spread to Cambodia from India where no such structures exist. Neither can the pyramid of the Pharaoh Zoser (the first known Egyptian step pyramid, constructed about 2800 B.C.) be considered the exclusive result of the creative imagination of its builder, the sage Imhotep. The notion of the shape of the "sacred mountain" as a step pyramid could have been disseminated verbally, in the form of cult objects, and, finally, as small and short-lived stone monuments.

Many reconstructions of the "sacred mountain" other than the known Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Cambodian, and Central American pyramids not only may, but do exist. However, they are not well enough known. There are tombs in the form of step pyramids in China and Korea [715, Table 24; 101a, p. 442]. Bronze Age step mounds have been found in the Baltic region [693, p. 18]. There is a Neolithic tomb in the shape of a step cone in Brittany [781, p. 224], and in the Northern Caucasus there is a sanctuary in the form of a step pyramid [346, p. 75].

Certain monuments in Armenia consist of relatively small step-pyramid stone structures crowned with an obelisk (phallic symbol?) or cross, a Neolithic symbol of the earth god [373, p. 39, Figs. 18, 19]. Similar structures can be encountered in Western Europe where they usually occur at crossroads [781, Tables 15-19]. W. Müller gives their French appellation, *perron*, with a variant *perrun* [781, p. 203]. This latter word coincides with the name of the Slavic thundergod Perun (the thundergod is the former earth god¹⁴³). Müller holds that these names are etymologically related to the French *pierre* ('stone'). Words like *perrun* and *pierre* are most probably related to the above *pyr*, *berg*, etc.

Golgotha is another name for "sacred mountain." It is assumed that it derives from the Hebrew *gulgoleth* meaning 'skull, head.' If this etymology is correct, it can be explained: some mythologies consider the "sacred mountain" to be the upper part of the underworld god's head. In early medieval Western Europe, the name Golgotha was used to refer to the "center of the earth" [781, p. 194]. Step pyramid structures with a cross, which symbolized the mythical "center of the earth", were termed "golgothas." In the course of time, as the notion of the cult cross came to represent the cross on which Jesus was crucified, a view emerged that elevations with crosses represent Calvary.

A small pyramid-like object was a fetish in Ancient Greece [225, p. 22] and in recent Ossetia [582, p. 98]. The Ossets dedicated such an amulet to the deity Tutyr, this

¹⁴³ See chapter "The White God."

mythological personage being a survival of the reduced Neolithic earth god's image. In some West European regions fire logs were arranged in a pyramid to prepare a bonfire for summer solstice rites [228c, pp. 22, 109]. The Russians shaped pyramidal cottage-cheese cakes for Easter. But both St. John's day and Easter were originally associated with the cult of the Neolithic earth god. The pyramidal or conical stone was a fetish among Arabs, referred to as the "house of god"; this is surely a model of a sacred mountain, a dwelling place of the earth god. In Canaan, a conical stone served as a fetish of Baal, god of the underworld and thunder. A conical black stone incarnated the divine phallus in the Near East [411, p. 230, 231]. The Abkhazians baked a special sacrificial conical cake before going on a hunt [10, p. 35]. A pyramidal heap of stones was a sacred monument cherished by both the Druids and the Brahmins. In the Northern Caucasus, burial monuments in the shape of small pyramids formed of stones still existed in the 19th century. Heaps of stones are encountered in the mountains of Daghestan, usually in deserted places; shepherds pile them up occasionally, "to kill time," as they explain it. The conical shape symbolized hill, fire, phallus, or fertility in ancient times [730a, p. 365], all these being attributes of the earth god.

Thus, the fetish representing the mythical sacred mountain rising in the center of the world was shaped like a cone, a pyramid, or a step pyramid. The cone and the pyramid are perfectly justified models of a mountain, but what is the origin of the step pyramid? W. Müller thought it symbolized the ascension of the souls of the dead from the underworld. A different explanation of the origin of this shape seems more reasonable. An earth sign in the form of several mutually inscribed rectangles was used in Asia Minor in the early Neolithic; it looks like a plan of a step pyramid or a terraced mountain. Very probably, it was here that the step-shaped image of the sacred mountain originated. Agriculture in this mountainous country must have been essentially of the terraced type. The sacred mountain, then, might be pictured as cultivated, covered by terraces and therefore having stepped slopes.

The cults of Olympus in Greece, Ararat in Armenia, Fujiyama in Japan, and the Himalayas in India are generally known. The veneration of mountains existed among the ancient Hebrews: Moses associated with God on Mount Sinai, divine services and sacrificial offerings were performed on high places (evoking protests by prophets opposed to manifestations of paganism). Veneration of mountains is a worldwide phenomenon. Opinions differ as to what prompted it. It has been suggested, for instance, that mountains seemed sacred because they rose high into the sky, the dwelling place of a deity [411, p. 158], or they were held sacred because they impressed the onlooker by their colossal size [606, p. 384]. These judgements are speculative, however. Numerous data indicate that mountains were associated with the image of the earth and underworld god.

In China, the mountain was considered a dwelling place of the master of the beyond who controls life and death [371a, p. 655], or of the lord of the heavens [371b, p. 28]. The name for the sacred mountain in Chinese mythology involves the word *lun*; *lung* which is an Indo-European

name for the moon and the Chinese name for the sacred serpent. A "nine-headed monster" lived on this mountain [371b, p. 29], the number nine being associated with the image of the underworld god. The World Mountain was also considered in Chinese mythology to be the head of the dragon Pang-hu. An ancient Hebrew name for the sacred mountain Sinai is apparently related to the name of the Semitic moon god Sin. The name of the Japanese sacred mountain Fujiyama contains the name of the Indo-Iranian and Near Eastern underworld god Yama, Yimu; according to a legendary account, this mountain emerged overnight, resembling an episode in an Egyptian myth about the emergence of a mountain from the boundless ocean, which marked the creation of the world. (It is noteworthy, that *fuji* is the appellation of a poisonous fish). In Ossetian mythology, the patron of mountains, *Hohy-dzuar*, is a bestower of crops and rains. The mountain spirits of the Apache Indians are capable of curing diseases [730a, p. 622]. In ancient Indian mythology, the mythical mountain believed to be the center of the world is referred to as *Mêru*, while the name of the Hawaiian lord of the dead, the underworld god, is *Miru*. The Indian "world mountain" *Meru*, known also to the Blacks of Central Africa, is situated under the North Star; the North Star will be shown to have been associated with the earth god. The Jerusalem hill on which the Temple stood, the spiritual center of the state, was called *Moriah*. *Ariel* is another name for this mount, meaning "lion-god," the lion having been an incarnation of the underworld god. The ancient Hebrews venerated this hill as the center of the world.

Records exist of Turkic and Mongolian traditions to the effect that certain people (race, tribe) came out of a mountain. This reflects the notion that according to Neolithic religious conception the earth god was the progenitor of mankind. In Sumerian, *ku(r)* means 'mountain' and *ki(r)* — 'earth'; these words sound alike and are apparently related etymologically, which is attested, for example, by the Sumerian name for the underworld god *Kur*. Pagan cult monuments known in Checheno-Ingushetia in places referred to as the "red mountain", red being a color symbol of the underworld god. This expression is also known from a Slavic tradition: the days preceding St. George's Day (April 22) or following Easter were called the "red hill," these festivals being originally associated with the cult of the earth god.

Available evidence indicates that mountains were associated with the Great Goddess as well as with the earth god. Cybele, for instance, was believed to dwell on mountain tops. Slavic paganism has left, alongside the expressions "red hill" and "black mountain," terms such as "white mountain" and "maiden hill." **Kel* is an Indo-European appellation for mountain [108, p. 669]; it may come from the name of the Great Goddess *Kali*. Ancient Greeks took newborn babies to mountain tops for vultures to devour, these birds having been considered throughout the Near East as representing the Great Goddess. The reason for associating mountains with the Great Goddess seems to be that the earth god's association with the mountain was to some extent transferred to his spouse. It could also be due to the fact that mountain tops are sometimes covered with snow, white representing the goddess.

Various types of linguistic evidence point to an association between mountains and the image of the underworld god. A range of mountains in Asia Minor derives its name, *Taurus* or *Toros*, from the name of the earth god pictured as a bull. The Nostratic **kar* means not only 'rock,' but also a hill. The Sanskrit *giris* ('hill') is 'steep elevation' [210a, p. 340]. The Albanian *gur* ('stone') [543a, p. 538].

The Russian words *gora* ('mountain') and *gori* ('to burn') are related [543a, p. 440]. In the same category the word *gora* are other Russian words associated semantically with the image of the earth god: *gori* ('sorrow, misfortune'), *goroh* ('peas'), *oreh* ('nut'). It remains an enigma why peas and nuts were associated in mythological thinking with this deity, but such associations did exist. Beans were ritual food in ancient times. Romans and Teutons referred to beans as "food of the dead." Peas were regarded as a symbol of fertility. They were associated with the bear in mythological consciousness [540, p. 124], because this animal, as will be shown below, represented the deity of the earth's interior. Russian tales mention a certain Tsar *Goroh* (King Pea) whose image, judging by the scanty evidence which has reached us, may have to do with the archaic earth god. The Russian expression "chuchelo gorohovoye" ('pea scare-crow') seems to allude to the idol of *Goroh*.

The Russian words *goroh* and *oreh* are quite archaic. They belong neither to the Indo-European nor even Nostratic language systems: the Abkhazian *ara* means 'nut-tree,' and the name of the Sumerian city *Erech* (Akkadian *Uruk*) resembles these Russian words. It is noteworthy that the Basque *ur* means not only 'nut,' but also 'water'; this word is related to the Hebrew *ur* ('fire') and Egyptian *hr* ('serpent'); it consequently goes back to the oldest lexemes pertaining to the image of the god of the lower universe.

The Georgians, to ensure rich crops, scattered nuts over the field during sowing [582, p. 123]. In France, during the carnival, childless women were showered with nuts [228b, p. 36]. In Greece, people scatter nuts in their homes at Christmas. Jews are not supposed to eat nuts on New Year's eve. In the south of Russia nuts are found in ancient burials. Walnut wood was used to kindle fires by friction during the Easter holidays [565, pp. 115, 116]. There was a superstition among the Slavs that it was dangerous to stand under a nut tree, for it was believed to attract lightning; in order to safeguard a house from lightning, a nut-tree twig was thrown into fire [565, pp. 112, 117], i.e., a sacrifice was offered to the god embodied in lightning and in fire. Old people in Daghestan warn against sleeping under a nut-tree lest it cause harm, for an evil spirit resides in the tree.

W. Müller cites information which throws light on the hypothetical origin of the "sacred mountain" notion. An Egyptian text dating from the beginning of the third millennium B.C. describes the creation of the world in the following way: dry land arose from the primordial waters as a "high hill" or a "flaming island" [781, p. 226]. This almost certainly describes the eruption of an underwater volcano. The mythologized association between the mountain and the earth god may be due to the

observation that volcanoes spitting fire from under the ground are in fact hills. They were named after Vulcan, the Roman god of underground fire and metalworking. In pre-Columbian America, human beings were thrown into volcano craters, apparently as sacrificial offerings to the underworld god. The Nivkhes, an ethnic minority in the Far East, believed that the fire-spitting mountain was the roof of the residence of the lord of the world and that smoke from his hearth rose through the roof.

It seems, however, that other associations lie behind the initial interrelation between mountains and the deity of the earth's interior. Neanderthal people placed bear heads and paws in remote caves high in the mountains. This shows that their attitude to the bear that dwelt in the mountains and made its lair in caves, i.e., within cavities in the earth's body, was mystical. This must have given rise to reverence toward mountains and caves.

Analysis of numerous myths and superstitions indicates that the bear was among the animals associated with the earth god. Mythicization of the bear could have been due to the animal's resemblance to man when it stood on its hind legs. In fact, Russian fairy tales and myths of Siberian ethnic groups identify the bear with man [371a, p. 644]. Since the bear hunted by Neanderthal man dwelt in caves, i.e., in cavities within the earth, this could have evoked the notion that the bear was master of the earth's interior. The association between the bear and the earth could also have been supported by the observation that when the earth became lifeless during the winter season, the bear fell asleep in its lair within the ground. Plutarch wrote that the Phrygians believed the god slept through the winter and woke with the approach of spring [201, p. 14]. It was believed in Italy that the bear came out of its lair on the 2nd of February [228b, p. 248]. In Rumania, the Feast of Purification falls on the 2nd of February, "Bear Day" [228b, p. 296]. As will be shown below,¹⁴⁴ the early farmers considered this the day when the earth god wakes and spring starts. In Yugoslavia, at the earth god wakes and spring starts. In Yugoslavia, at Christmas (i.e., when the Black God was believed to retire to sleep), a bear was symbolically invited to supper [228b, p. 248]. At the beginning of February, peasants forecast how long the winter was going to last from the behavior of the bear, wolf, or goat. Mummers wore bear, wolf, and goat masks during Shrovetide/Carnival and Christmas holidays. Some myths and traditions feature an "immortal" personage who, judging by his characteristics, derives from the image of the earth god; the bear incarnates immortality for American Indians [730a, p. 189]. In Hittite rites the bear impregnated trees [108, p. 498]; as the tree represented the Great Goddess, this must have expressed the notion that the heaven goddess was impregnated by the earth god.

Many European and Asian peoples identified the bear with the devil [240, p. 272], i.e., with the demon of the underworld. Among some Siberian groups, the supreme god imagined as a bear was named *Torym* [85, p. 81], which corresponds to the earth god's name **ter* discussed above. By way of comparison, the Germanic god *Thor* was sometimes personified as a bear, and the corresponding Slavic *Perun* was referred to as *Medvedka* (little bear) [40a,

¹⁴⁴ See chapter "The Four Seasons."

pp. 387, 389]. Siberian and North American aborigines call the bear "man of the mountains," "mountain god," "lord," "wise sacred beast," "old man" [85, pp. 80, 81]. The bear possesses features of the mythical serpent in popular beliefs of various peoples: it is a prophetic being, a keeper of hidden treasure, medicines were prepared from parts of its body [240, pp. 273-275; 521, p. 50]. "The bear takes on the appearance of a snake or of a dragon in fairy tales of Siberian peoples. The bear, like the serpent, is an adversary of the fair deity" [198, p. 52].¹⁴⁵

The Latin *ursus* and the Greek *arktos* for 'bear' seem to derive from the Proto-Indo-European **urs-en* ('male'); this category of words may include the appellations of other animals associated with the earth god, such as the Germanic *horse*, *ross*, the Georgian-Hurrian *hari*, *hurri* for 'bull,' and the Proto-Indo-European **er* for 'lamb.'

In Russian tradition, the expressions "fierce bear" and "fierce serpent" correspond [197, p. 62]. The word *luty* is Ukrainian for February; as mentioned above, this is the month when the god-bear wakes up¹⁴⁶. The Slavic *luty* now means 'fierce, ferocious,' although this must be its secondary meaning; *luty* can be compared to the Greek *lykos* ('wolf') [543b, p. 547] (the wolf was considered an incarnation of the underworld god). It may also be compared to the Western Semitic mythical serpent Lotan and the Greek and Slavic *Leto* of the goddess Leto or Lada, whose image recalls the earth god's spouse, the Great Goddess.¹⁴⁷

Some traditions relate that the bear was formerly a heavenly creature, exiled to earth by the heaven god for insubordination [371b, p. 129]; this is one of the legends about the devil cast out of heaven. The American Indians regarded the bear as the lord of the underworld or the spirit of the north [734a, p. 189], the north being associated with the underworld lord in the mythologies of various peoples.¹⁴⁸ Among some American Indian tribes, the bear was the patron of healers [371b, p. 128]. Since the bear embodied a deity who in the course of time became an evil spirit, it was looked upon as "impure" [521, p. 49]. The notion of the bear as an incarnation of the devil was assimilated in Christian tradition.

Evidence so far available does not suggest that chthonic meaning was attributed to the cult image of the bear. However, chthonic it must have been if the bear incarnated the underworld god. And indeed, Bronze Age cemeteries with bear interments are known.

A belief has persisted through the ages that the bear favors abundant crops (the earth god personified fertility). According to a popular superstition, a bear head buried in the ground ensures an increase in livestock [98, p. 169]. People wearing bear pelts participated in a Slavic rite of the first tillage [198, p. 58]. A bear-shaped ritual vessel dating

¹⁴⁵ See chapter "The White God" on the relationships between the lord of the underworld and the "fair deity."

¹⁴⁶ It is commonly believed that February is called *luty* ('severe, ferocious') in Slavic languages because of the "bitter frosts" of this month. January, however, is colder than February. In Russia, for example, February was called "bokogrei" ('body warmer'), as the sun begins to warm the earth during that month.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter "The Great Goddess" for information on these and other names and terms comprising the root *Leto*.

¹⁴⁸ See chapter "The Four Directions."

from the fifth millennium B.C. has been unearthed in Rumania [696, p. 119], apparently intended for performing a rite of "watering the earth."

Neolithic female statuettes sometimes feature the goddess as a she-bear (for she was the spouse of the earth god). Artemis was venerated in the image of a she-bear; her priestesses were called "she-bears." In Athens, maidens of marriageable age performed cult dances wearing bear masks [696, p. 200]. It was customary in Russia to call newly-weds "bears". The Shrovetide bear masquerade was erotic in character. Fables about bear and woman cohabitation can be traced to the same source as myths about the tempter serpent.

The bear personified a formidable god, and it was inadvisable to mention his name lest it cause misfortune. Therefore the original Slavic name for the bear was forgotten. The Siberian appellation for the bear was also taboo.

The aboriginal populations of northern Eurasia and America had a ritual observance referred to in ethnographic literature as the "bear feast"; this rite shows only slight variations across the vast regions involved. It consisted in the ritual slaughtering of a bear, followed by its being ceremonially eaten by the male members of the tribe. The bear was addressed in words indicating that it was the tribe's ancestor. The festival was accompanied by rituals involving fire and by phallic rites. Having killed the bear, the tribesmen circled it, repeating, "We didn't kill you, you died your own death. Don't think evil and don't harm our children"¹⁴⁹ [85, p. 84]. The bear's head and paws were preserved in a special place; incidentally, the head and paws of the bear were endowed with magic properties in the superstitions of present European and Caucasian peoples. The "bear feast" seems to be a survival of the tradition going back to the bear rites of Neanderthal people, the predecessors of modern man [85, p. 84].¹⁵⁰ Those rites involved taking bear heads and paws to caves high in the mountains, outside the zone of human habitation.¹⁵¹ Considering these facts, one cannot doubt that the bear cult has endured throughout the history of mankind, from the Mousterian period to the twentieth century. It seems that the bear image was the earliest manifestation of the earth god and of a god in general.

Cave veneration is as common as veneration of mountains. Paleolithic inhabitants of France, Spain, Italy, the

¹⁴⁹ A special meaning is implied in the words "do not harm our children." The ancients believed that those who died were taken by the underworld god or by the heaven goddess as a sacrifice. Because of high child mortality, an opinion prevailed that children were the favorite food of the bloodthirsty gods.

¹⁵⁰ Modern research has refuted the older view that Neanderthal people were primitive anthropoids who walked stooping on bent legs, had low foreheads, were as hairy as animals, and uttered inarticulate sounds. In fact, they were not very different externally from the Cro-Magnons, and their crania were no smaller than those of modern man. They should be classified as a particular race, not as "half-humans."

¹⁵¹ When the "bear caves" were discovered, scholars offered a rationalistic-utilitarian explanation: that these were places for storing food. But why should Neanderthal man choose the uneatable parts of the animal carcass — the head and paws — to store? Other scholars suggested that these were remains of bears that entered remote caves to die. But why were only the heads and paws left? And how did these remains come to be found in a niche more than a meter above the floor or within a stone border?

Urals, and Central Asia left paintings of cultic significance in caves, usually reaching deep into the earth's interior. Some peoples of subsequent epochs made their sanctuaries in caves. Some ancient Cretan caves served both as sanctuaries and as smithies, evidently because the underworld god was considered a blacksmith. There are numerous data suggesting that the cave cult was derived from associating caves with the earth god, with the underworld. According to many popular beliefs, a mythical dragon dwells in a cave. Beliefs were widespread that winds, rain, and clouds hide in caves; primitive thinking associated sexuality with caves [371b, p. 311]. American Indians believe that sea spirits reside in caves (the sea is one of the spheres of the god of the nether regions). Caves, in American Indian myths, are where mankind first emerged, and where people return after death [371a, pp. 517, 518]. Other Indian legends relate that a god emerged from a cave on a mountain, and that one can enter the underworld through a cave [568a, p. 95]. Ancient Chinese sources mention "Cave Su," believed to be the entrance to the kingdom of the dead [371a, p. 314]. Cave burials were practised by many peoples widely separated both territorially and in origin. All this indicates that caves were considered the abode of the god of the earth's interior.

The Neanderthal people who inhabited Europe and Western Asia 60 to 30 thousand years ago entered into fights with the bear not only for its flesh, but also in order to occupy its dwelling place, the cave. Neanderthal interments may be understood as peace-offerings to the slain "host." This is attested by characteristic features of known Neanderthal burials.

To begin with, they were done in caves. One might surmise that this was because the deceased were buried in the place where they had spent their lives. However, there is only one interment, sometimes a few, in a cave which housed many people for generations. It is striking that burials (solitary ones at that) were made before people occupied the cave [113, pp. 16, 24]. There are cases of Neanderthal interments in caves which were never used as dwelling places. Half of all known Neanderthal burials contain the remains of children; this also supports the supposition of sacrifices (the high percentage of infant interments cannot be accounted for by high child mortality, for these burials are single or few within each cave). Three quarters of all known adult burials contain the remains of women; apparently the idea of offering female sacrifice to the deity of the lower universe was the invention of Neanderthal man.

The cult nature of Neanderthal burials is confirmed, for example, by traces of bonfires, and by the east-west orientation of the bodies, heads westwards. In a cave in Italy, a Mousterian interment of a human head was found showing signs of violent death; the head was impaled and surrounded with a circle of stones. Very impressive is a Neanderthal child burial in the Teshik-Tash cave (Uzbekistan): the bones bear signs that the flesh was removed from them (this may indicate ritual cannibalism) and they are placed in disorder, intermingled with ibex bones and surrounded by six pairs of ibex horns; this burial was made before people moved into the cave as a home and remained the only one in it.

Bear bones are found next to human bones in some Neanderthal interments. In one case, a chamber containing bear bones covered with a stone slab was found next to a human burial [707, p. 55].

The earliest people could have discovered that if a dead body was left in the ground, eventually only its bones remained. They could have well concluded that the flesh was eaten by the earth. Consequently, a sacrificial offering to the earth god should be buried in the ground. Hence myths that the earth swallows up humans, in particular the myth of Cronus devouring his own children. Remember also the biblical story of how the earth swallowed Korach, and the strange words about Canaan: "A land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." The remark, "the ground which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood" (Genesis 4: 11), also testifies that according to ancient outlooks, the earth "eats."

It is impossible to account for Neanderthal interments in utilitarian terms. The human body buried by the Neanderthals was usually laid in a shallow hole, sometimes placed on the cave floor and covered with earth. The corpses were apparently tied up, for their legs are bent to the point of being twisted. In most cases the hands are near the face, so that the hands must have also been fastened; this position might mean that the face was covered by the deceased's own hands. In some cases the position of the body shows that it was carelessly crammed into the narrow hole. Such are Neanderthal burials everywhere — in Western Europe, the Crimea, and Palestine.

Interment of the dead in the ground, first devised by the Neanderthal people and practised ever since, was initially meant as a sacrificial offering to the earth god. It later turned into a procedure for conveying all dead bodies to the deity, for it was obviously believed that the dead were chosen by the god as victims. There can be no other explanation for this burial rite. Any sanitary or hygienic considerations by Neanderthal people or by the early representatives of modern man are out of the question. Besides, interment is not the only known funerary rite, and it was not as common in the past as it is now: there were different techniques of burial, and what is of interest, they not infrequently differed even within a single population, within a single culture. However, all known ways of burying the dead may be interpreted as conveying the deceased to the earth god (interment in a natural or the man-made cave, in a boat, incineration, or feeding the dead body to the dogs), or to the heaven goddess (burial in a pitcher, in the hollow of a tree, in a tree trunk or crown, or feeding the body to the birds). There is an Armenian saying about the funeral repast: "This bread is being consumed." The expression means that "death is being consumed," and its origin probably lies in the notion that the dead are food for the gods as bread is for people. That the deceased was looked upon as offered to the deities is confirmed by symbols on gravestones: the cross, the rosette, the horse, etc.

Neanderthal burials as well as Neanderthal "bear caves" indicate that rudiments of the Neolithic religion existed as early as the Mousterian period. These cult elements include: the notion of the bear as a deity, more specifically, as an incarnation of the earth god; mythicization of bear

killing; association of the cave with the earth god; the notion of the earth god as a mystical "master" of the human dwelling; the concept that human, in particular infant, sacrifices must be offered to the god of the earth and patron of the dwelling; interment in the ground as a realization of this sacrifice; mythicization of the east-west direction as a component of the earth god cult.

Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal people coexisted over a period of ten to twenty thousand years. Whether as a result of mutual contacts or because people of the modern physical type descended from Neanderthal man, they inherited from the latter certain characteristics of his material and spiritual culture, including interment of the dead in the ground. Cro-Magnons, like Neanderthals, buried their human sacrifices in caves; in some cases the funerary ritual involved lighting fires; the body sometimes lies over a thick layer of ashes and is strewn with ashes; it became common practice to strew the corpse and the grave with red ocher; sometimes the skulls were reddened; bodies were laid east-west; not infrequently parts of animal carcasses are found interred, bearing no traces of having been used for food; the cult of the bear and horned animals continued to be practised.

Having seen that the earth god was initially personified by the bear, one may suggest a hypothetical etymology of some names and terms associated with the deity.

The Old English *ber* and the German *Bär* mean 'bear.' The Slavs, too, may have had the same appellation for the bear, judging by the word *berloga* ('lair') which, suggested by B. Rybakov, can be interpreted as the bear's den (*ber* for 'bear' and *logovišče* for 'den, lair') [475, p. 102]. Linguists believe that these words for the bear derive from the Nostratic **bora* ('dark brown') [210a, p. 183]. But, on the other hand, the Nostratic **bora* might have originated from the word for 'bear'. The history of language shows that the names of colors derive from objects, not the other way round. Therefore, if dark brown was designated by the word **bora* in the Nostratic language, the word must have been preceded by a corresponding name of a dark brown object — the bear. Generally speaking, a euphemistic appellation for an animal could derive from its color. However, this does not seem to have been the case here. Corresponding to the above name for the bear are names for other animals which were also considered incarnations of the earth god, such as the English *boar*, Russian *borov* ('male pig'), and Turkic *bör, bōri* for 'wolf.' The root-word **b.r* and its various phonetic modifications can be traced to numerous names and terms associated with the earth god.

1) *b.r.* The Nostratic **bergi* ('high') [210a, p. 177], whence Germanic *berg* ('mountain'), Albanian *burg* ('mountain'), Swedish *bora* ('elevation, shore, cliff'), Russian *bereg* ('shore'); Latin *birrus* ('red'); *bir'a* means 'river' in a number of Siberian languages¹⁵²; *a-bar-ga* is the Buryat-Mongolian name of a mythical snake-fish, *abra* is the name of a symbolic snake representation in the Altai [102, p. 92]; the Russian word *bor* means 'coniferous forest' and 'cemetery,' *bara* is 'swamp'; in Hebrew *bār* means 'cereals' and 'wild nature,' *bor* is 'hole, pit,' *ba'ar* is

¹⁵² There is a river named Biru in South America (Peru derives from it).

the verb for 'burn, flame,' *abir* is 'powerful stallion, bull,' *barak* means 'lightning,' and *birah* 'castle'; Barry is an Irish masculine name meaning 'spear'; some Slavic names — Boris, Borislav, Borimir; ethnonyms *berber* and *barbaros*; the Germanic *bur* ('fire, burn'); the Latin *Bur* *ave* (Long live Bur!, which was transformed into *bravo*); Bur is the universal progenitor in Scandinavian mythology; Bur-Khan is the creator of the world in the mythology of the Siberian peoples [730a, p. 261]; Būrt is the ancient Turkic god of death (hence probably the ethnonym *Buryat*); Berlic is an evil spirit in Swiss folk beliefs; Berlin is a toponym apparently derived from the name of the earth god; Boreas is the god of the north wind in Greek mythology (according to the myth, he dwelt in a cave and had intercourse with a mare); and names for the Great Goddess, such as Bereguinya, Brigit, etc.

2) *b.l.* The name of the Semitic thundergod Bel, Balu; Bhalu is an ancient Indian masculine name meaning 'bear' [730a, p. 208]; Bile, Beli is a Celtic mythological progenitor of mankind, who dwelt in the underworld and received human sacrifices; Bilu is a Burmese ogre; the English *bull* and *bell* (chiming is a religious ritual inherited from paganism); the Russian *boloto* ('swamp'); the Old Russian *balii* ('healer'), *obilie* ('crops').

3) *m.r.* Mer or Ber is the god of fire in Assyria; Mer or Mermer is another name for Iškur, the Sumerian lord of the underworld; Mercury is the Roman god of the winds, one of whose duties was to conduct the souls of the dead to the underworld. Mēru is the name of the World Mountain in Hindu mythology; the Aramaic *mar* means 'master'; the Hebrew *mar* is 'bitter' and 'sorrowful'; the Latin *mare* is 'sea'; the English *marsh* and German *Moor* ('bog, marsh'); one of the Indo-European names for the horse **mark*, and similarly sounding words *mor*, *moru* for 'horse' in Central Asian languages; the Etruscan god, patron of vegetation Maris, Roman Mars, Slavic Mara, etc; Sumerian *mar-tu* and Akkadian *amurru* for 'west,' the ethnonym *'emori* (Amorites), the Roman Amor (Amur, Cupid).

4) *p.r.* The French *perron* ('step pyramid') and *pierre* ('stone'); Egyptian *pr* ('home'); *pur, pir* mean 'wolf' in Finno-Ugric languages; the Greek *pyr* ('fire'), Persian *pir* ('old man'), Daghestanian *pir* ('sacred place'); Perun is the name of the Slavic thundergod; Paris is the name of the mythical Trojan prince who abducted the mythical Helen, in other words, this is the name of the underworld creature who abducted the sun-maiden.

5) *f.r.* Frey or Freyr is a phallic deity in Norwegian mythology, the god of fertility, the patron of marriage, the bestower of rain, the patron of riders; he was in captivity during the winter. Corresponding to him is the English pagan deity Fro who had common characteristics with Priapus [790, p. 246]; *f.r.* is an appellation for the moon in some Semitic languages; Faruk or Boruch is a Semitic masculine name; Faró is a Nigerian thundergod; *furca* is Latin for 'two-prong fork, boar-spear, snake tongue'; *ferōx* means 'gallant, brave,' *ferēcitas* 'fecundity,' *ferālic* 'funeral,' and *ferrum* — 'iron.'

6) *p.l.* The Nostratic **palā* ('bog, swamp') [210b, p. 97]; Russian *plamya* ('fire'); pre-Greek **pelos* ('stone'); Greek *polos* 'spindle, rotation point' (the contemporary international word *pole* derives from it).

7) *ph.l.* The Greek *phallos* ('phallus') and *phalós* ('white') suggesting that *b* can pass into *ph* [543a, p. 148]¹⁵³; the German *Pfeil* ('arrow'); *pharaoh*.¹⁵⁴

8) *v.r.* The Slavic *var* ('hot, heat'); Armenian *varem* ('set fire to, kindle'); Lithuanian *virti* ('boil'); *vir* — one of the names for 'wolf' in Finno-Ugric languages (alongside the form *pir*); the Latin and Scythian *vir* for 'man'; the Russian *voron* and Finnish *vares* for 'raven, crow'; the ancient Iranian *vahrka* ('wolf').

9) *v.l.* A common name for the earth god and related terms, for example, the Slavic *Veles*.¹⁵⁵

The root-word in various phonetic variations could be accompanied by particular suffixes or prefixes. Examples with suffixes: the Germanic *Berg, Burg* ('mountain, town'), *Bark* ('boat'), Ossetian *beræg* ('wolf'), English *bolt, bird, bride*, Slavic *volk* ('wolf'), *molot* ('hammer'), Hebrew *bre-hah* ('pond, pool'); the name of the river Volga, the ethnonyms *Belg* (Belgium) and *Bulg* (Bulgaria).

Prefixes are various. Ibér is an ancient name for the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. Imer is a toponym and an ethnonym in the Caucasus. Hibernia is an ancient Latin name for Ireland, a corruption of the Celtic Iveriu. 'Ever,' 'Ivri' is the archaic ethnonym of the Jews.¹⁵⁶ Different peoples, such as the Turkic-speaking Central Asian and indigenous Daghestanian, bear the name Avar. An ancient people who inhabited the south of Russia in the first millennium B.C. were called Kimmer. Homer is the name of an ancient people who once inhabited Asia Minor. The Ossetian *gumir* ('giant'); Megrelian (Western Caucasus) *gemara* and

¹⁵³ The chapter "The White God" discusses how the notion "white" came to be associated with the earth and underworld god.

¹⁵⁴ The etymology of this word from the Egyptian *pr-w* ('big house') is hardly correct, although *pr* belongs in the sequence of the words being analyzed. *Pharaoh* is a Hebrew word (*par'o*), which seems to have the **p.r* root as *pará* ('behave violently').

¹⁵⁵ See chapter "The Black God" for more detail.

¹⁵⁶ According to tradition, the ancient Jewish ethnonym 'Ivri stems from 'avar' ('to get across'; "those who came from across the Jordan River" or "from across the Euphrates"), or from 'ever' ('the other side'). Indeed, matching this shade of meaning are the Hindi *avara* and the ancient Egyptian *'apiru* ('vagabond'). However, specialists in the ancient languages of Western Asia find the comparison between 'Ivri and 'apiru unjustified. Besides, there are other ethnonyms similar to 'Ivri, whose origin does not correlate historically with the notions "roam" or "get across," for example, the Avars of mountainous Daghestan, the Imerians of the Southern Caucasus, the Iberians of the Iberian Peninsula. Similarly, the 'Ivri tribes hardly got their name because they "came from beyond the river." The ethnonym 'Ivri for the tribes that once populated the entire territory of present-day Syria was known not only in Canaan, but also in Mesopotamia and among the Hittites (the Habirai are mentioned in a Kassite source [496, p. 72] and the *ilani habiri*, i.e. "Habiri gods" in Hittite texts). Most probably, the word 'Ivri is a phonetic variant of the ethnonym for the Amorites ('Emori), which corresponds to the name of their supreme god, the thundergod Amurru. Generally speaking, the Amorites were not only a specific people; the name **amr* applied to different tribes which populated the territory from Canaan to Mesopotamia in 2200–1500 B.C. In particular, the Bible applies this term also to the Canaanites. There is a further explanation for the ethnonym 'Ivri: Abraham's ancestor 'Ever is regarded as an eponym for the Jews. Thus, the available phonetic variants are 'Ivri, 'Emori, and 'Ever. An ancient Egyptian inscription reports the conquest of the "Ibrim region" by a pharaoh [446, p. 147]. It is easy to see that Ibrim is the plural of 'Ivri. As for the cult term *b.r/v.r.* with which the ethnonym of the Jews is probably connected, it is, incidentally, the root of Hebrew words meaning "impregnate," "sin," "wrath," all notions associated with Neolithic gods.

Swanetic *gwimar* for 'fern' (this plant seems to have been associated with the earth god, for it figures in folk beliefs and rites of the summer solstice festival¹⁵⁷). The Sumerian *zabar* ('copper, bronze') which is considered a borrowing from the unknown language of the Mesopotamian pre-Sumerian population, the Turkic *tebir, temir* ('iron'), Indo-European *tapar, tebor, topor* ('axe'; metals and **xt* are typical attributes of the earth god¹⁵⁸); the Hebrew *devorah* for 'bee'.¹⁵⁹ The Etruscan *tivr* ('moon'), the name of the river Tiber, and the Greek *tauros* for 'bull' may belong in the present category of lexemes or of those with the root *t.r* (see chapter "The Bull-Moon").

The root *b.r* often appears in combination with the prefix *s-*, discussed earlier.¹⁶⁰ Sumer is the ethnonym of the Sumerians. Subar is an ethnonym of a people who inhabited Northern Mesopotamia in the third and second millennia B.C.; Šubartu is an Akkadian name for Northern Mesopotamia. The ethnonym Sparta and the common Thracian name Spartak belong here, as do the Russian *sever* and Lithuanian *šiaure* ('north'). The Severyane were a Slavic tribe, the Savires were a Turkic people, the Sebereis were an ancient tribe in Misia (Asia Minor). *Sevir* is the Arabic for 'bull.' Šible is the Adygeian thundergod. Svarog is the name of an eastern Slavic pagan god. The Mongolian appellations for the wolf are *sebr, subr, zobr*. The Slavic *zubr* means 'aurochs.' Siber is the name of a fabulous Buryat water-dwelling monster dog [102, p. 92]; the Greek Cerberus is his parallel. Nin Subur (The Great Subur) is one of the names of the Sumerian underworld god [730b, p. 1173]. Subur, Sumer are the names of a mythical mountain referred to in Central Asian tradition; in Buddhism, the sacred dish on which sacrifices are offered has a representation of the sacred mountain called Sumeru in the center [102, p. 93]. Sibir was a locality north of the Caucasus, which, according to Rashid al-Din's *History of the Mongols*, was conquered by Djuchy-khan. Siberia seems to belong in the same category.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ On this festival see chapter "The Four Seasons."

¹⁵⁸ The connection between metals and axe and the image of the earth god is discussed in the chapter "The Black God."

¹⁵⁹ In this word, *-ah* is the feminine gender ending; the bee represented the heaven goddess; consequently, the hypothetical **devor* (nearly coinciding with the aforementioned *temir* and *tapar*) is a term associated with the earth god.

¹⁶⁰ See chapter "The Bull-Moon." Note that the prefixes *s-* and *h-* are phonetic variants of the same protoform (compare, for example, the Sanskrit *sivar* and the Avestian *hvar*, the Latin *sol* and the Greek *helios* for 'sun').

¹⁶¹ O. Suleimenov's etymology of the toponyms Siberia and Sumer as deriving from *sub-yer* ('water-earth') [509, p. 259] is most probably erroneous.

THE SUN BIRD

Many believe that the cross became the symbol of Christianity because the Savior was crucified on it. This opinion has been opposed on the grounds that the Roman crucifixion structure was T-shaped rather than cruciform. The latter argument, however, is not without difficulties: the T was indeed the usual shape, but the cross was also used. Besides, a crucifixion implement of any shape was called *crux*, i.e., 'cross.'

Yet if the crucifixion cross were the prototype of the Christian cross, the elongated, so-called Latin cross would have become the original Christian cult symbol. However, in the Byzantine Empire, the territory where Christianity took shape, the equal-armed cross was the emblem of the religion. It is also hard to accept that the image of an instrument of torture would become an object of worship in the first centuries of Christianity: this particular type of execution was a disgraceful one.¹⁶² Indeed, the cult image of the Crucifixion appeared only in the fifth century, a few hundred years after this manner of execution was abolished, and it was not until the end of the sixth century that it was established as the venerated Christian emblem [852, p. 98].

The cross as a Christian cult symbol does not derive from the crucifixion cross, yet in early Christianity, at least from the second century, the cross was venerated. Controversy over cross worship has been recorded. Minucius Felix, a Latin author of the third century, wrote: "We do not venerate crosses and do not need them. It is you,



Fig. 168. Cross as non-Christian symbol: 1 — portrayal of an Assyrian king [831, p. 123]; 2 — statuette from Benin; 3 — North American Indian [784, p. 96]; 4 — ornamental elements in Africa, Oceania, and America [750, pls. 26, 27, 33].

¹⁶² Veneration of an instrument used for putting a beloved one to death is, generally speaking, a perversion. A certain priest by the name of Bogumil protested against worshipping the cross: "How can one bow before it? The Jews crucified the Son of God on it" [250, p. 181]. Bogumil, however, was unable to change the tradition.



Fig. 169. Sign of cross in Ancient East: 1 — Mesopotamia, ca 2000 BC [410, p. 25]; 2, 3 — Turkmenia, ca 3000 BC [572, p. 19; 343, p. 150]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764b, p. 313].

with wooden gods, who venerate wooden crosses as their accessories" [498, p. 249].

Orthodox followers of the new religion voiced protests against veneration of the cross because it used to be a pagan symbol. But for the mass of neophytes, the cross was a customary sacred sign, and this proved decisive in its assimilation by Christianity together with other elements of paganism. Other pagan symbols, too, were used in early Christianity: swastika, six-pointed star, etc.; the cross, which was the most revered, prevailed. The Church recognized it in the fourth century and ordained it as its emblem.

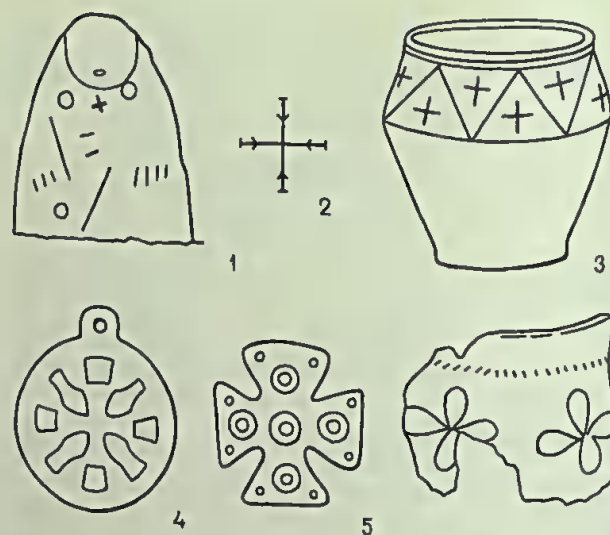


Fig. 170. Sign of cross in Ancient Europe: 1 — France, ca 3000 BC [659a, p. 59]; 2 — Czechoslovakia, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 27]; 3 — Log-frame culture, ca 1500 BC [532, p. 244]; 4, 5 — Koban culture, ca 1000 BC [537, p. 83, pl. 125]; 6 — Kurgan culture, Northern Black Sea region, ca 3000 BC [285, p. 107].

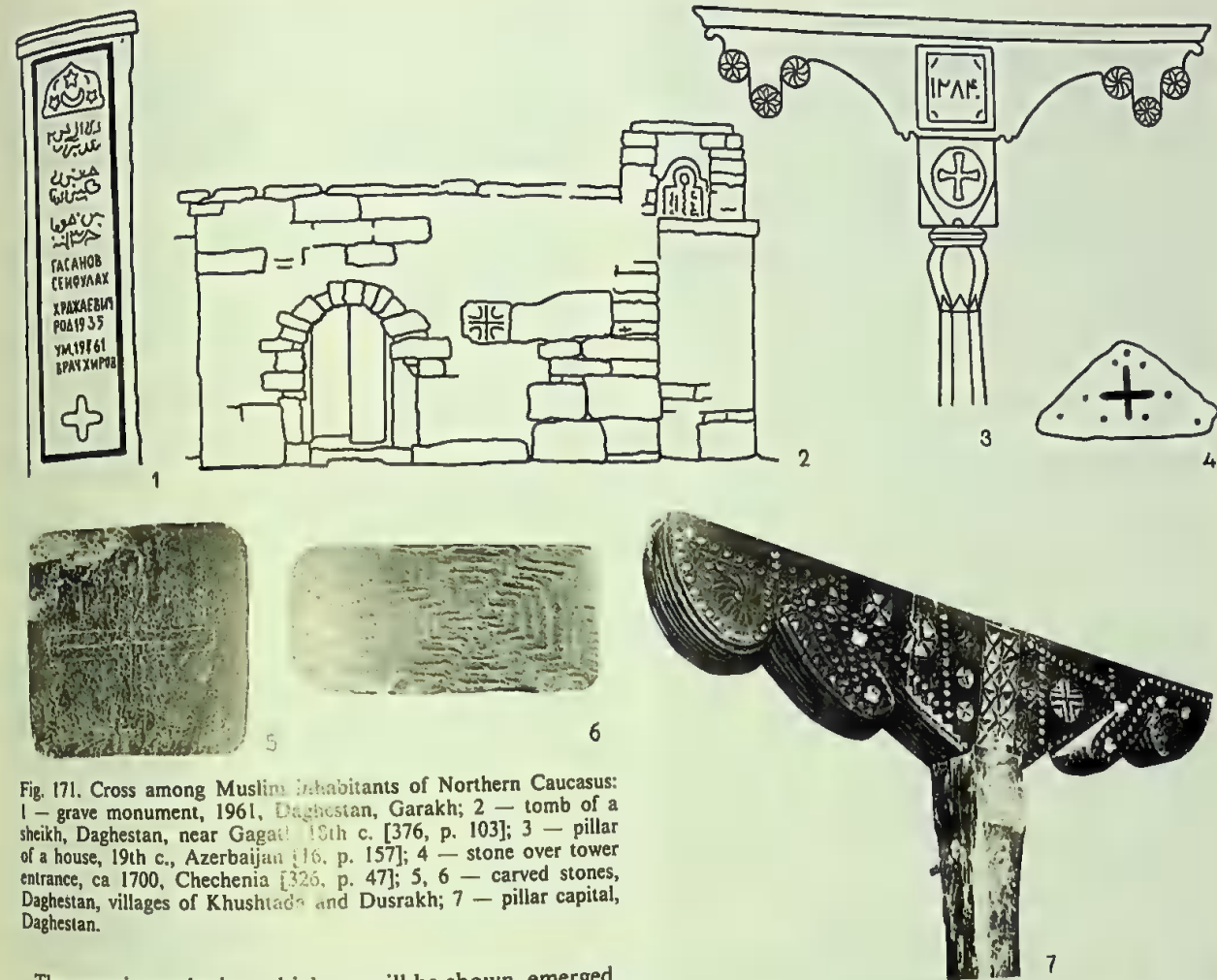


Fig. 171. Cross among Muslim inhabitants of Northern Caucasus: 1 — grave monument, 1961, Daghestan, Garakh; 2 — tomb of a sheikh, Daghestan, near Gagat, 18th c. [376, p. 103]; 3 — pillar of a house, 19th c., Azerbaijan [16, p. 157]; 4 — stone over tower entrance, ca 1700, Chechenia [326, p. 47]; 5, 6 — carved stones, Daghestan, villages of Khushta and Dusrakh; 7 — pillar capital, Daghestan.

The cross is a cult sign which, as will be shown, emerged as far back as the Stone Age. Ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Etruscans, and Greeks wore it on the breast as Christians did later; American Indians also had the same custom. Unlike a number of cult symbols in more or less limited regions, the sign was known almost universally, including Africa, Oceania, pre-Columbian America (Fig. 168). Yet the cross is most common in ancient artifacts of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

The cult cross sign first appeared in the Western Asian early farming region encompassing the territories of present-day Turkey, Iran, Syria, and northern Iraq, about the seventh to fourth millennia B.C. [763, p. 78], and spread worldwide by the second millennium B.C. (Fig. 169). Crosses of different types are encountered in ornaments of the Ancient Orient. They include the so-called *crux ordinaria*, the Maltese cross, etc. Various types of crosses are common in archeological monuments of the fourth to third millennia B.C. in southern Turkmenia, but not earlier [572, p. 14]; this may indicate that the cross spread from west to east within the Western Asian part of the early farming cultures territory.

The cross was known in Europe in the fifth-fourth millennia B.C. That it was a major religious symbol to local Neolithic tribes may be seen, for example, from a stela resembling a human figure with a cross at the neck (Fig. 170: 1). However, this sign is less frequent in European than in Western Asian archeological materials of that time.

It is not known whether the cross was venerated by the Kurgan culture Proto-Indo-European tribes north of the Black and Caspian Seas in the third millennium B.C. The bearers of the Kurgan culture were not in the habit of carving crosses in stone or picturing them on pottery, yet they might make them in wood, wickerwork, leather, cloth, and other short-lived materials. However, a probability is not necessarily a fact. The only known example of cruciform signs on Kurgan culture artifacts is shown in Figure 170: 6; judging by its appearance, it should be an adaptation from Western Asia (cf. Fig. 16: 2). If one turns to an earlier period of Proto-Indo-Europeans' history and accepts the hypothesis that they originated from the Kura-Araks culture region, it must be admitted that no evidence of cross veneration has been found in the archeological monuments of that culture. It was probably at the turn of the third and second millennia B.C. that the cruciform cult symbol was assimilated by the inhabitants of both Northern and Southern Caucasus.

In the region encompassing Southern Russia and the Northern Caucasus, including Daghestan, crosses have been found on pottery, metalwork, and in rock wall paintings from the second millennium B.C., i.e., since the Bronze Age (Fig. 170: 3-5). Taking the antiquity of this cult symbol into account, one can understand why Caucasian mountain dwellers, both Christian and Muslim, held it in esteem.

Until quite recently different Caucasian peoples observed certain customs involving veneration of the cross. The nature of these rites cannot be ascribed to the influence of Christianity. The Chevsures sewed crosses on their clothing [51, p. 42] (this was also done by Russian peasants; see Fig. 275: 5). The same custom existed among the mountain-dwelling Tajiks, who never professed Christianity [68, p. 53]. In Daghestan, where the population adopted Islam between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, one can still see children with crosses sewn on their clothing. In old Ossetia a sheep sacrificed to a pagan deity was brought to the hearth to have a cross seared on its head before the slaughter, after which the priest painted a cross sign in blood on the donor's forehead [442, pp. 33, 34; 185a, pp. 128, 215]. Even in Georgia, where Christianity was already fully established fifteen hundred years ago, scholars consider the cross a pre-Christian cult sign [50, p. 171]. Students of Daghestanian petroglyphs also say that the sign of the cross appeared there long before the adoption of Christianity [37, p. 346]. In Russia, crosses are known "in enormous quantities from long before the establishment of the Christian religion" [502, p. 8].

Instances of the cross used as an ornamental element or as an obvious symbol are encountered in Daghestan literally at every step. These diagrams include specimens which can be traced to monuments of the distant past. By way of example, the contoured cross (Fig. 171: 5) was known in Elam in the fourth millennium B.C. [38, p. 43], in Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C. (Fig. 169: 1), and in the Southern Caucasus in the second millennium B.C. [276, p. 383]. The cross with contours outlined many times (Fig. 171: 6) was also known in the fourth millennium B.C. in Iran and Southern Turkmenia (Fig. 169: 2).

Cruciform signs dating from the Middle Ages, found in Daghestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, and North Ossetia, are sometimes explained by scholars as due to the influence of Christianity [314, p. 112]. An ornamented grave stela on display in the Makhachkala (Daghestan) museum of local lore (Fig. 181: 1) was classified by A. Bashkirov in 1931 as a "Christian sarcophagus"; in 1977, M. Mammayev also listed it among the Christian monuments. However, this is a typical example of pagan symbolism. The ornamental elements on the stela include an S-shaped sign, a symbol of ram horns, a pagan cross with four little circles, rosettes, the Tree of Life with two birds — all common motifs in the vernacular decorative art.

Some crosses in the Northern Caucasus are indeed linked to the Christianity professed by part of the local population in the Middle Ages. Yet if the cruciform symbol had been essentially an outcome of the Christian tradition among the Caucasian mountain dwellers, it would not have been used so widely in domestic graphic art. Suffice it to note that despite centuries of Islamic domination in Daghestan, the Muslim crescent is not typical of the vernacular architectural decoration, or of the decorative folk art in general. Crosses appear on architectural details of houses, on household utensils, on gravestones, even on mosques (Fig. 171: 1-3); crosses are still quite common in Daghestan, whereas the crescent is extremely rare. Even now the cross is perceived by elderly men and women in Daghestan as a traditionally revered, or at least magic sign;

for example, when flour is spread on a board for kneading dough, a cross is drawn on it with the finger [598, p. 79].

Other Islamic peoples of the Caucasus also used the cross in the quite recent past as an element of architectural ornamentation (Fig. 171: 3, 4). Stone crosses were erected in early Muslim burial sites in Checheno-Ingushetia. "A nineteenth century mosque in the village of Bachi-Yurt has in its decorative frieze crosses of four equal-length arms with the words Allah and Muhammad inscribed on them" [321, p. 113].

Various opinions have been expressed as to the origin of the cross. In most cases the authors of the corresponding publications propound unfounded judgements on the problem, or put forward precarious explanations reinforced by no more than the categorical tone of their statements. Other authors borrow the unfounded statements and treat them as established truth.

B. Goff maintains (rather than suggests) that the cross derived from the checkered pattern looking like a chess board [701, p. 3].

K. Bolsunovsky states, without offering argumentation: "The cross is a crossroad symbol" [77, p. 11]. If so, what caused people at different periods of history (fourth to second millennia B.C.) and in different parts of Eurasia (Iran, Asia Minor, Northern Caucasus, and Western Siberia) to portray the "crossroad symbol" on the bottom of vessels [43, p. 129; 169, p. 255; 428, p. 181; 572, p. 15; 648, p. 46]?

A no less peremptory judgement, that the cruciform cult sign originated from the representation of the wheel with four spokes [155, pp. 50, 51] is also unfounded. This hypothesis was offered by Joseph Déchelette, who in studying a wheel-like symbol to which he attributed solar meaning, concluded that other symbols, including the cross, were derived from it (Fig. 101: 3, 4). However, such a transformation with the principal characteristic element, the rim, dropped, and the secondary, the spokes, remaining, is doubtful. Besides, in the second millennium B.C. wheels had dissimilar numbers of spokes (4, 6, 8), in the fourth-third millennia B.C. they were solid, and before that they were not even in existence, whereas the cross was venerated in Western Asia since at least the seventh millennium B.C., not to mention Paleolithic and Mesolithic cruciform signs.

V. Markovin believes that the cross is a schematic representation of the human figure, V. Toporov — that it is a "geometrized version of the World Tree" [371b, p. 12]. These speculations are not based on reliable argumentation.

Some authors state that the cross is a symbol of the four directions [114, p. 193; 471, p. 29; 468a, p. 32; 696, p. 89]. There are grounds for such an opinion,¹⁶³ but other facts point out the cross as an emblem of the solar deity. Such was its meaning, for example, in Akkad and Babylon, and in the Aztec and Mayan empires. In the context of some graphemes the cross appears as a solar symbol. The sun may be symbolized either by a rosette or by a cross in the ancient emblem combining solar and lunar signs (Figs. 71, 72). Rock wall paintings in Sweden often show

¹⁶³ See next chapter.

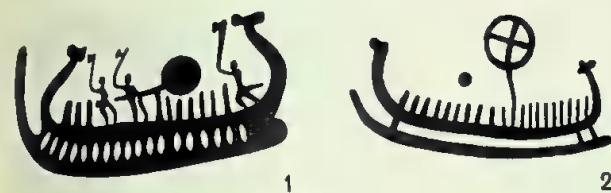


Fig. 172. Sun boat: 1, 2 — rock wall pictures, Sweden [746, p. 126].

a boat transporting the sun; in these cases, the sun could be designated by a disk or some other symbol, including a cross within a circle (Fig. 172).

The symbol of a disk with a cross was an important emblem in antiquity. It figured in cult observances (Fig. 258: 7). To make it easier to carry and mount, it was attached to a staff. Judging by later representations, this emblem was mounted on a pedestal when it was meant to be stationary (Fig. 173). The dissemination of the emblem in the form of the disk, with or without a cross, on a pedestal, across the territory from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, indicates that it was a generally revered cult symbol adopted by the ancient peoples of Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia. No wonder it became known in Daghestan (Fig. 174). A vertical tombstone — stela — was conventional in Daghestan since the 12th century; various ornaments, images, inscriptions, and symbols, including an almost inevitable rosette (Fig. 174: 1-3), are usually carved on it. The Daghestan rosettes seem to be solar symbols. On this assumption, the disk with a cross, which occurs at about the same place as the rosette (Fig. 174: 8) in the design on the stela, is also a solar symbol.

Daghestanian stelae of various shapes constitute a typological sequence in terms of common semantics: with a rosette carved on the surface of the tombstone (Fig. 174: 2); with a rosette crowning the tombstone (Fig. 174: 4); with an emblem in the form of a disk on a pedestal carved on the surface of the tombstone (Fig. 174: 6); and, finally, with a sphere crowning the tombstone (Fig. 175: 1).

The stelae illustrated in Figures 174: 4 and 175: 3 resemble a human silhouette. Students of such stelae have therefore steadily expressed the opinion that the monuments were stylized images of the human figure. A. Miller thought that the substitution of a rosette for the human face on the stela was due to Islam's prohibition of human images [359, p. 40]. In Ossetia, however, such "anthropomorphic," as they are referred to in the corresponding publications, stelae are found in Christian cemeteries as well. P. Debirov refers to stelae bearing elements of clothing — the belt, gazys¹⁶⁴ on the chest, etc. [141, p. 33]. Such details, however, are rare; they first appeared in the 19th century; their presence indicates only that the meaning of the ancient symbols was by then forgotten, and that the stelae looked like human figures to those who made them as to modern scholars.

V. Markovin believes that "contemporary Daghestan gravestones go back in origin to ancient anthropomorphic stelae" [323, p. 24]. However, no ancient stelae, anthropomorphic or otherwise, have ever been found in the highlands of Daghestan or the entire Northeastern Caucasus. The earliest known Daghestanian stelae date back to the 12th

¹⁶⁴ Gazys were a characteristic element of nineteenth century Caucasian male attire: they were breast pockets for rifle cartridges.

century (Fig. 174: 7), while the rosette with the rectangular base, seen on them, does not compare morphologically with stone idols of steppe inhabitants — the Scythians, Turki, and other nomadic tribes of the Northern Black Sea region.

Finally, stelae of the same type as the late medieval gravestones of mountainous Caucasus existed during Classical Antiquity throughout the Roman Empire, from the Balkans to the Pyrenees (Fig. 176: 1, 2). Neither Islam nor the Black Sea steppe nomads had any connection with them.

Figure 176: 3 shows an early medieval Central Asian design of a niche in the form of a rectangle crowned with an oval. Why should the niche resemble a human silhouette? And why need a man's head be rendered as an oval? This is not a human silhouette, but an emblem representing a sacred symbol placed on a pedestal. The symbol was originally a heaven sign.

In Europe, on Christmas Eve, the sun with a cross inside was painted on house doors for protection against the "evil spirit" [228a, p. 252]. A similar design occurs, among

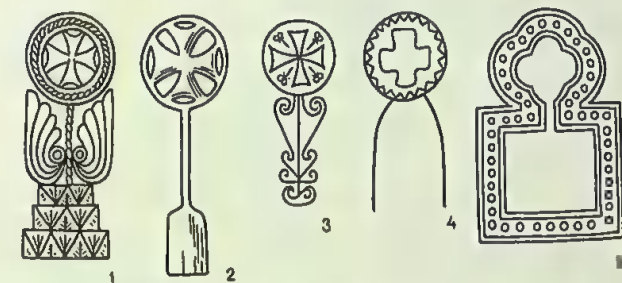


Fig. 173. Sacred emblem — cross in disk on pedestal: 1, 2 — Georgia, ca 700 CE [602, p. 34; 590, pl. 30]; 3 — Ireland, ca 700 CE [216b, p. 126]; 4 — Pyrenees, Middle Ages [642b, p. 591]; 5 — Syria, Middle Ages [700, p. 151].



Fig. 174. Grave stelae in Daghestan: 1 — Chirag, 19th c.; 2 — Ashaga-Kartas, 18th c.; 3 — Dibgashi, 15th c.; 4 — Shilaghi, 19th c.; 5 — Tsnal, 18th c.; 6 — Kug, 13th c.; 7 — Kandik, 12th c.; 8 — Tinit, 19th c.



Fig. 175. Pseudo-anthropomorphic stelae in Daghestan: 1 — cemetery near Sovetskoye; 2 — Kalakoreish; 3 — Vikhli.

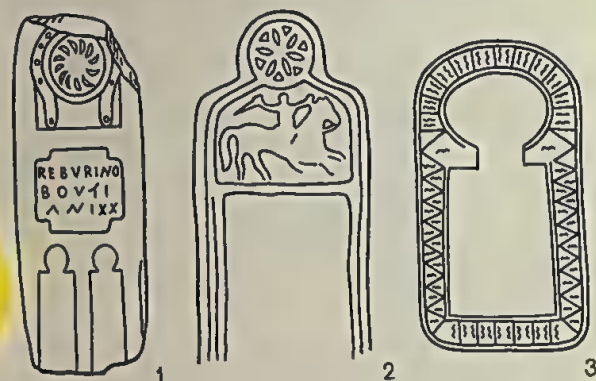


Fig. 176. Disk or oval on pedestal: 1, 2 — Spain and Bulgaria, Roman period [809a, p. 30; 149, fig. 79]; 3 — Turkmenia, 12th c. [421, p. 119].

other solar symbols, in Bronze Age rock wall paintings in Daghestan (Fig. 177: 1). In another case the cross is surrounded by dots which seem to have symbolized sunlight in Daghestanian rock wall paintings (Fig. 177: 2). The cross with such radiance used to be carved on stones in medieval Daghestan and in Chechenia (Figs. 40: 1; 171: 4). A rosette with the cross is also commonly encountered (Fig. 177: 4-6). But if the disk with the cross is a solar symbol, what is the meaning of the cross in such a case, and what has it to do with the sun?

Of the various hypotheses on the semantics and origin of the cross, the following is the most generally recognized: the cross allegedly symbolized the sun because it was an ideograph of fire, and it allegedly acquired this meaning because the ancient implement for deriving fire by friction was cruciform. For instance, the statement is made: "A wooden instrument used by primitive man for obtaining fire was the prototype of the cult cross" [78b, p. 349]. However, no such "cruciform implement" ever existed. A. Neuhardt, author of a book on the origin of the cross, writes: "This sign represented a primitive instrument for obtaining fire — two pieces of wood which were put crosswise and rubbed vigorously one against the other" [392, p. 5]. To make the story more convincing, the book



Fig. 177. Cross in circle: 1, 2 — rock wall paintings, Bronze Age, Daghestan, near villages of Chinahita and Kara; 3 — element of decor of carved wooden pillar, Daghestan, Mukkuli; 4 — wood carving, Russia, 17th c. [142, p. 44]; 5 — wood carving, highland Georgia [51, pl. 6]; 6 — door of a house, Daghestan, Duakar, ca 1900.

cover has the above scene represented on it (Fig. 178: 1). However, this picture is pure fantasy: there is no proof whatever that this technique of obtaining fire was used by primitive people.

Fire was generally obtained by friction for which the boring method was used, i.e., a wooden stick was rotated within a hollow in another piece of wood (Fig. 178: 2). This implement for starting a fire was not cruciform, but looked rather like an overturned letter T. In particular, the ancient Indo-European tribes obtained fire by boring and not by using reciprocating motion [435, pp. 6-8]. The same applies to the ancient Semites, if one considers that the notions 'burn' and 'bore, drill' are conveyed by the same word in Hebrew. The sawing technique in which two wood bars were placed crosswise was the least common primitive method of procuring fire [432, p. 12]. It was characteristic of Southeastern Asia and Indonesia, where bamboo grows, as this technique is more efficacious when the wood is bamboo [27, p. 19]. Yet in this particular part of the world the cross was never venerated as a sacred symbol.

Another, more convincing hypothesis has been proposed according to which the cross originated from an ideograph for the sun: this sign derived from the schematic representation of a bird in flight [839, p. 249]. Cruciform bird

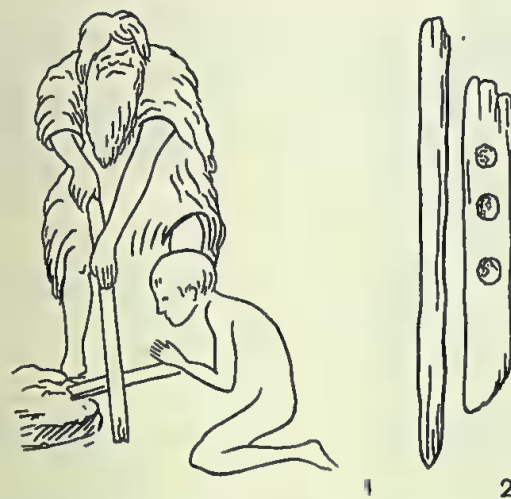


Fig. 178. Device for making fire by means of friction: 1 — imaginary method [392]; 2 — actual device [295, p. 15].



Fig. 179. Cross-like representations of bird: 1, 2 — Siberia, Upper Paleolithic [111, pls. 18, 21]; 3 — Georgia, Bronze Age [425, p. 58]; 4 — Cyclades, Bronze Age [868, p. 258]; 5 — Scythians [30, p. 25]; 6 — Koban culture [537, p. 68]; 7 — Elam, ca 4000 BC [356, p. 448]; 8 — Urals, ca 1900 [577, p. 34].

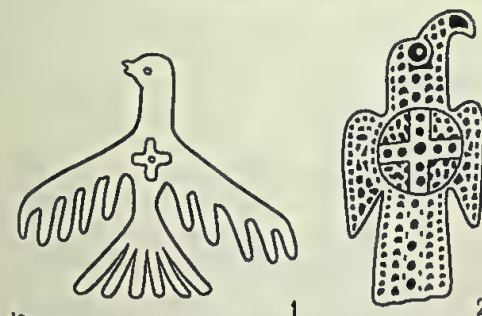


Fig. 180. Bird with cross: 1 — Mexican folk art [142b, p. 36]; 2 — Western Europe, 6th c. [78a, p. 418].

representations were used in the Paleolithic (Fig. 179: 1, 2), during the Bronze (Fig. 179: 3, 4) and Iron (Fig. 179: 5) Ages, and even as recently as the beginning of the 20th century (Fig. 179: 8). The notion 'bird' was expressed by a cross in Assyrian cuneiform writing. The notion of the identical meaning of cross and bird has been recorded in the decorative art of different periods and on different continents (Fig. 180). St. Jerome (end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century) compared the cross of Jesus Christ to the bird in flight.

Deriving from the schematic representation of the flying bird, the cross became a solar symbol, since in ancient mythology the sun was likened to a bird in flight. In the Rig-Veda the sun is repeatedly compared to a bird [97, p. 259]. The sun was pictured as a bird by Slavs [394, p. 18], Germanic tribes [829b, p. 77], and American Indians [361, p. 135]. In Mesopotamia, the eagle symbolized the midday sun [405, p. 22].

According to myths of the ancient Near East, the bird Phoenix personified the sun [424, p. 18; 606, p. 451]. In Ancient Egypt, the mythical bird Bennu, called Phoenix by the Greeks, was believed to be a representative of the sun god Ra [251, p. 25]. Scholars generally do not doubt that the myth about the immortal Phoenix, consumed in fire to rise again from the ashes, "is connected with the sun which sets in the fiery ocean of the evening glow in the west and rises again the next morning" [298, p. 25]. We will return on the origin of Phoenix, but it is true that in Classical Antiquity this poetic mythical image was interpreted as an allegory of the "immortal sun."

The above examples indicate that the sun was pictured as a bird in ancient times and that the mythological image of the fiery bird symbolized the sun. But these conceptions are apparently relatively recent; at any rate, they were not universal. The cult bird image, including the fiery bird, could, as will be shown later, have a different content.

Concerning the symbolic cross sign between two brackets (Fig. 58), it may be suggested that while the circle, disk, and rosette are general solar symbols, the cross is an ideograph expressing the notion of the sun which travels across the sky during the day, appearing (being born) in the morning, and retiring (dying) in the evening, to appear (rise from the dead) again. Thus, the cross seems to be a symbol of the sun as an incarnation of immortality, eternity. Many peoples believed that the souls of the dead take up their abode in birds; in Ancient Egypt, a representation of a bird was a hieroglyph for the word 'soul.' This could have formed the basis for a semantic connection in the sequence "immortality—soul—bird—cross."

Cruciform bird figurines cut from stone, found at a Malta site in Siberia (25th millennium B.C.), are the only reliable proof that the cruciform figure was a cult symbol in the Paleolithic and that it then designated a bird. There are two or three cruciform signs among Paleolithic cave paintings in Mongolia [402], however, there are no data to suggest their meaning. One can only ponder over the meaning of crosses occasionally encountered among Paleolithic cave paintings in France [733, p. 142; 6, p. 592]. The cross occurs on Mesolithic painted pebbles of the Le Mas d'Azil cave [659a, p. 319]. But Paleolithic and Mesolithic crosses are rare; it is not possible to judge their connection with

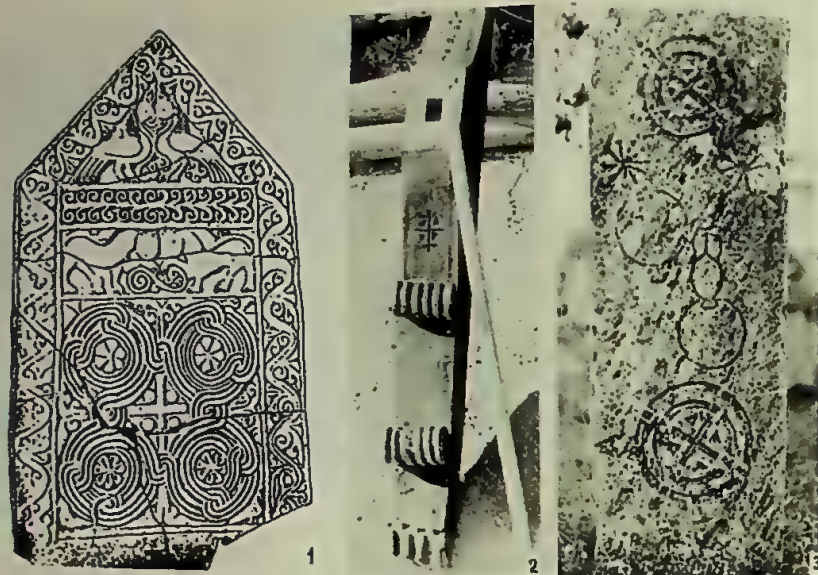


Fig. 181. Cross with four dots, Daghestan: 1 — medieval grave stela, Verkhne Gonoda; 2 — carving on a capital, Alkhajikent; 3 — grave stela, Kug; 4 — carved stone, Gulady; 5 — carved stone, Khushtada; 6 — carving on a capital, Kharbuk.

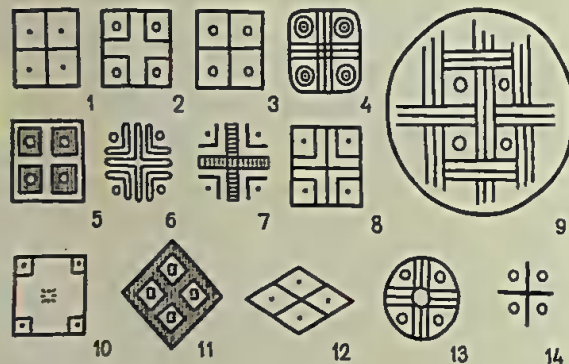


Fig. 182. Cross with four dots: 1-5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni, ca 3000 BC; 6 — Log-frame culture, ca 2500 BC; 7 — Grecian pottery, ca 800 BC; 8 — Dnieper region, ca 800 BC; 9 — Russian textiles, ca 1200 [468a, p. 33]; 10 — Hittite, 1500 BC [51, pl. 24]; 11 — Southern Turkmenia, 3000 BC [572, p. 19]; 12 — Philippines [750, pl. 14]; 13 — Ancient Crete [416, p. 88]; 14 — Malaysia [750, pl. 15]; 15 — Russian embroidery [468a, p. 33]; 16 — Thailand [454, pl. 7]; 17 — Mexican Indian [750, pl. 33; 862, p. 590]; 18 — North American Indian [702, p. 102].

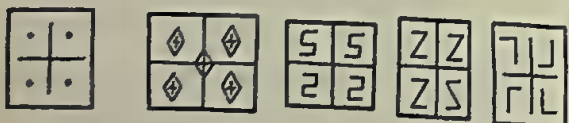


Fig. 183. Origin of cross with four dots: according to A. Bobrinskoy [71, pls. 3-5].

other elements of designs, or their origin or semantics.

The rather sparse ornamentation of objects of the Kostenki (Ukraine) Paleolithic complex includes a design in the form of a sequence of X-shaped elements. B. Frolov calls them crosses and believes that they were used to designate the four directions [555, p. 143, Table 11]. This is not likely, since the two lines forming the sign do not intersect

at right angles. Besides, these X-shaped signs occur in a chain, which does not fit their interpretation as symbols of the four directions. A similar ornamentation was found on a Paleolithic object discovered in Germany [508, p. 104]. It seems then, that in the Paleolithic the chain of X-shaped signs was a common and stable symbol with a specific meaning; but they are not crosses.

The sign of a cross was used by the Neanderthal people [508, p. 127]. Generally speaking, there is evidence that Neanderthals were capable of expressing ideas by both material and graphic symbols. Yet so far there are no grounds for forming judgements as to what they meant by the cross sign or whether it was a stable symbol for them. B. Frolov's assumption that the Neanderthal people knew the notion of the "four directions" is not supported by argumentation.

The sign of a cross with four dots between the arms (Fig. 181) often figures in the ornamentation of Daghestanians as well as other mountain dwellers of the Caucasus. The symbol was known among many peoples from ancient times (Fig. 182). It first appeared in the Neolithic as an earth symbol and designated "four directions" or "four fields of the earth." It seems that people of later epochs understood it differently. K. Steinen, who offered a verisimilar interpretation of certain Bronze Age symbols, held that the square with the inscribed cross and signs between the arms (Fig. 183) designated nest with bird and eggs or nestlings [839, pp. 263-268]. Steinen thought these designs meant specifically storks which build their nests on roofs, and that they expressed the wish for proliferation, fertility. This hypothesis about such a meaning of the cross with dots (or other signs) between the arms was supported by A. Bobrinskoy [71, p. 73].

There are examples from the Bronze Age and until the Middle Ages showing that the cross with four dots was equivalent to the plain cross, and the cross with four dots within a disk was equivalent to the cross without dots within a disk.

The emblem in the design shown in Figure 184: 1 may be understood as designating either the sun or the sky. A

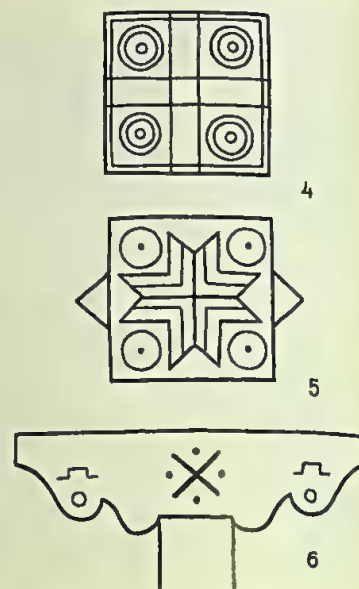


Fig. 184. Cross with four dots as a symbol: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Tidib, 15th c. [141, p. 102]; 2, 3 — urns from Troy, ca 2000 BC [827, p. 35; 824, p. 383].

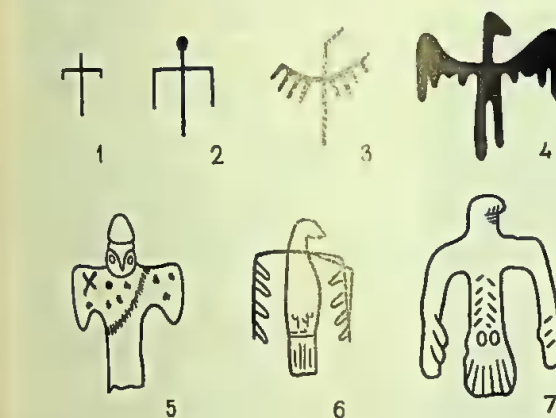


Fig. 185. Cross with lateral appendages and its origin: 1 — sign on towers in Checheno-Ingushetia; 2 — sign on a tomb in Ingushetia, Lejg; 3 — Spain, Mesolithic [788, p. 210]; 4 — Southern Turkmenia, ca 3000 BC [344, p. 18]; 5 — Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [869, p. 26]; 6, 7 — Urals, Bronze Age [577, p. 79; 61, p. 190].

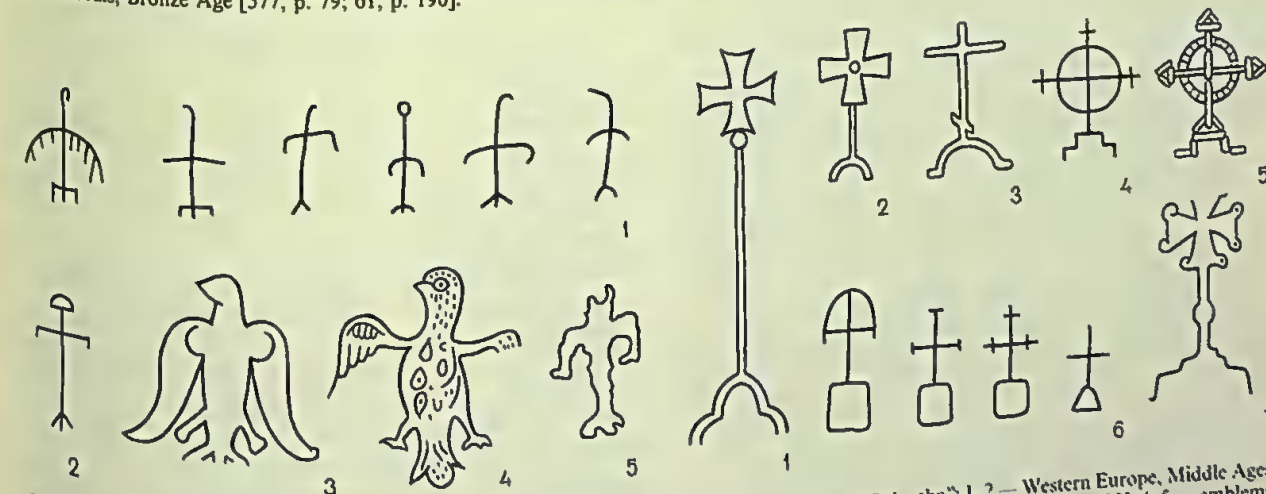


Fig. 186. Heraldic bird: 1 — bird portrayal among Uralian Ugres [577, p. 34]; 2 — design on a carved stone, Ingushetia [266, p. 189]; 3 — relief on a tombstone, ca 1100, Daghestan, Kalakoreish; 4 — medieval Russia, ca 1100 [133, p. 63]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 8000 BC [763, p. 78].

comparison between 2 and 3 in Figure 184 indicates that the emblem could occupy the same position as the ring, the heaven symbol. Possibly the cross (or the cross with dots) within a circle is a symbol of the relationship between the heaven and earth deities. In Figure 184: 3, the ring (the heaven goddess' symbol) designates the goddess' generative organ, and in Figure 184: 2 it has been impregnated, as in the composition in Figure 158: 8.

Some North Caucasian medieval structures, mainly in Checheno-Ingushetia, bear a cross sign with lowered ends, i.e., with vertical extensions at the ends of the transverse line (Fig. 185: 1). A similar image with longer extensions and with a bulge at the top of the vertical line (Fig. 185: 2) enables one to figure out its origin: it is also a schematic representation of a bird (Fig. 185: 3-7), though in a sitting position, rather than flying.

In Ingushetia such a sign has been found with three extensions at the bottom (Fig. 186: 2). This resembles bird representations in the Urals (Fig. 186: 1). Three extensions at the bottom are a schematic way of showing the bird's feet and tail (Fig. 186: 3, 4). A similar design was encountered among rock wall paintings in Asia Minor, believed to date from the eighth millennium B.C. (Fig. 186: 5). An analysis of this version of the cross also indicates that the cross used to designate a bird. The Latin cross with a longer lower arm must have derived from the representation of a bird in the sitting position.

In Checheno-Ingushetia, crosses that look like schematized heraldic representations of birds are abundant. The bird image must have occupied a prominent position in cult conceptions there. An Ingushi settlement bears the name Erzi, meaning 'eagle'; according to legend, this name came from an eagle image on a tower in the settlement. The Ingushes residing in this locality were referred to as *mākal* ('kite') by the neighboring Ossets, and the Ingushes had no objection to this appellation. However, the Ingushes never worshiped animals or plants. This rules out the possibility that the bird was an object of veneration there. That it might be a totem is out of the question;

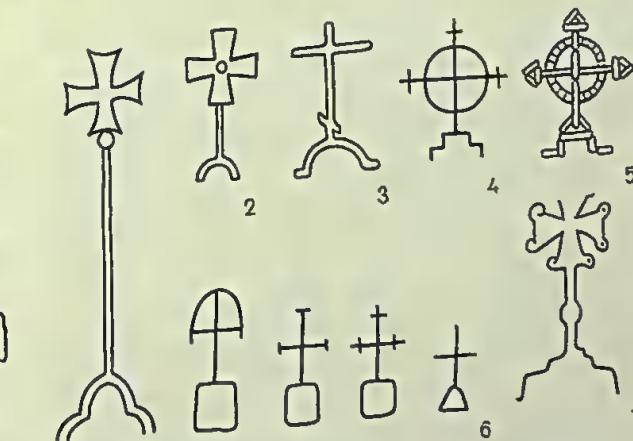


Fig. 187. Cross with "Golgotha": 1, 2 — Western Europe, Middle Ages [624, p. 88; 625, p. 2]; 3 — Russia, 16th c. [142, p. 22]; 4, 5 — emblems on walls of 15th c. structures in Russia; 6, 7 — medieval designs in Daghestan [141, p. 104; 36, p. 171].



Fig. 188. Cross with sprouts beneath: 1 — sanctuary in Ingushetia, N'uy; 2 — tower in Chechnia, Tsai-Pkheda; 3 — tomb in Tsai-Pkheda; 4 — Georgia, 19th c. [510, p. 168]; 5 — Ingushetia, [326, p. 47]; 6 — Spain, Bronze Age [744, p. 120]; 7 — Middle Ages [386, fig. 83]; 8 — Russia, Middle Ages [464, p. 232]; 9 — Central Asia, ca 1950; 9 — Ancient Greece.



Fig. 189. Cross with crescent in Daghestan: 1 — decoration of clay grain casket, Ullu-Terkeme; 2 — stucco coating of a gate pillar, Karabudakhkent; 3 — fireplace ornament, Mugri [139, p. 86].

no indications of totemism have been discovered in the Caucasus. Possibly the bird served the Caucasian mountain dwellers as a fetish associated with the conception of the solar deity. On the other hand, the fragments of mythology discovered among Caucasian mountain dwellers point to an extensive stratum of relict beliefs going back to the Neolithic religion, in which the cross symbol had a different meaning.

The varieties of Christian crosses include one branching out in the lower part (Fig. 187: 1-5). This grapheme resembles a cross on an elevation, giving rise to the assumption that it is a Calvary cross. However, data exist which suggest a different idea.

There are medieval representations of the cross on a pedestal in Daghestan (Fig. 187: 6, 7). Such crosses were probably set up there during the expansion of Christianity from Georgia. Remnants of monuments which look like a cross on a pedestal were found in Georgia and Armenia.

In Catholic countries, wooden crosses stand by roadsides or other prominent sites to this day. It is noteworthy that in Lithuania the Church unsuccessfully tried to ban the setting up of such crosses [693, p. 92]; this implies that they were pagan, rather than Christian in origin. There are, indeed, images of the cross on a pedestal dating from the Bronze Age and even the Neolithic (Figs. 300: 2; 160: 7).

The "Calvary" cross often figures on medieval structures of Ingushetia (Fig. 188: 1). V. Markovin is of the opinion that this "major symbol of Christianity," as he calls it, was adopted by the inhabitants of Checheno-Ingushetia from Georgia together with the Christian religion in the 12th—13th centuries [329, p. 126]. Markovin defines a variant of this sign in the form of a human image as a crucifixion.

These conclusions, however, are open to debate. The cross with branching in the lower part figures on nearly every defense tower in Ingushetia (this was not the case in Georgia), but it is absent in local churches that were distinctly influenced by Georgian architecture and art; at the same time, such crosses are common on pagan

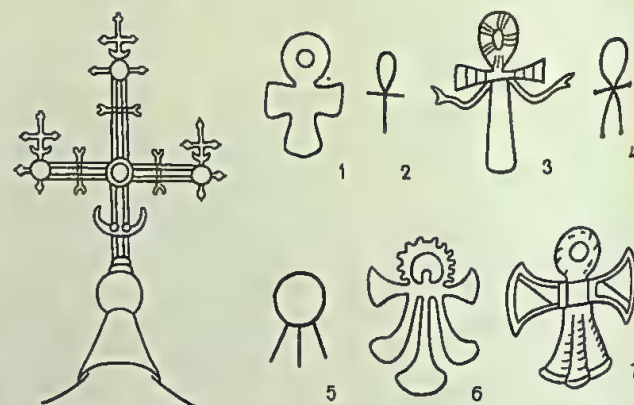


Fig. 190. Christian cross with crescent: 18th c. church in Moscow.

Fig. 191. Ancient Egyptian "sign of life": 1, 2 — Egypt, 2000—1000 BC; 3 — Egypt, ca 800 BC [632, pl. 15]; 4 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [680, fig. 17]; 5 — widespread ancient symbol; 6, 7 — Ancient Crete [867, pp. 363, 360].

Ingushian tombs. It is therefore most unlikely that in this region crosses of this shape could be due to Christian and Georgian influence. As for the human figure whose silhouette resembles a crucifixion, this image could have emerged in the imagination of the builder of the tower, as it occurred to the contemporary archeologist. The secondary origin of the "crucified human figure", more accurately, its chance nature, is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that it is the only one in all Checheno-Ingushetia, as well as in the entire Caucasus.

Cruciform anthropomorphic representations with unusually curved legs (Fig. 188: 3, 4, 7, [820, p. 91]) are found in Chechnia, as well as in Georgia, Russia, and Spain. Checheno-Ingushian crosses with branchings in the lower part (Fig. 188: 1) could have derived from similar more archaic figures or from "Calvary crosses" (Fig. 187: 2); they could be a result of confusion between the two. As for the cruciform figures with curved legs, they correlate with known Greek representations of the goddess with snake-like legs (Fig. 188: 9). It was mentioned above that the earth god sign was sometimes placed on the legs of the heaven goddess' figure. The serpent was a common manifestation of the earth god, consequently, the image of the snake-legged goddess should be placed in the category of representations of the goddess with the earth god symbol on her legs. The earth god symbol on the legs of the goddess could mean that the goddess was pictured as a World Tree with roots growing down into the ground; the legs of the goddess were regarded as the roots of the tree. Figure 188: 7 is a schematized representation of the Great Goddess with typical iconographical elements: lifted arms, horns, snake-like legs. The object in Figure 188: 8 (a vessel for koumiss — fermented mare's milk, the goddess being considered a bestower of milk and water) is a variation of the snake-legged goddess.

The design of a cross and a crescent is frequently encountered in Daghestan (Fig. 189). This cannot be accounted for by Islamic influence, because it also figures as a Christian emblem (Fig. 190). As already stated, the combination of a cross and a crescent is a very ancient emblem, much older than both Islam and Christianity.

Among various cruciform symbols is an Egyptian sign that served as an ideograph of the notion "life" (Fig. 191: 1, 2). The Egyptians made a distinction between it and the cross proper; this can be seen from the fact that some images of a certain god have a cross at the neck and a "sign of life" in the hand. The cross came to be used by the Egyptians as a sacred symbol during the Middle Kingdom, whereas the "sign of life" was used in older monuments. The anthropomorphic interpretation of the "sign of life" (Fig. 191: 3) is a later modification of the archaic symbol and cannot be of relevance for studying its source and original semantics. The "sign of life" has a ring in the upper portion. This ring is large in older examples (Fig. 191: 4), from which it follows that it was an important detail of the symbol. A symbol in the form of a ring with three extensions was common in ancient times (Fig. 305). The Egyptian "sign of life" may have derived from this grapheme by transformation (cf. Fig. 191: 2, 5). A different source is also possible: this sign resembles a combination of a labris and a ring with three extensions (Fig. 191: 6, 7).

Thus, the "sign of life" is by origin a symbol of the Great Goddess and has no relevance to the genesis or semantics of the cross. However, since the "sign of life" in fact resembles the sign of the cross, in the early period of Christianity they were accepted as identical symbols. The Copts, who are of ancient Egyptian descent, refer to the Christian cross as the sign of life. Based on this misconception and on another, according to which the World Tree, also called the Tree of Life, is allegedly a symbol of life, some scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the cross is a grapheme deriving from the representation of the Tree of Life [625, p. 7].

Let us consider possible origins of some words for 'cross.'

Etymological dictionaries trace the Russian word *krest* ('cross') to the German *Christ*; it is also pointed out that this borrowing was due to the emblem representing the crucifixion [543b, p. 374]. It is doubtful, however, that the name of this major Christian emblem could have been assimilated in Russia from the German language: the Christian religion was adopted in Russia from Byzantium. Cultural relations between Russia and Germany were established much later than the 10th century, when Christianity was introduced in Russia; so what was the name for the cross when Russia first adopted Christianity? In the tenth century the cross was already termed *krest*: the word figures in the treaty between Prince Igor of Kiev and Byzantium (911). Besides, if the Russian *krest* originated from the German *Christ*, what was the origin of the German *Kreuz*?

The Russian word *krest* has analogies not only in German, but also in many other European languages, including the Latin (*crux*, *crucis*, which could not derive from the name of Jesus Christ). It may be compared to the Old Russian *kres* ('come to life,' hence *voskresenie* — 'resurrection') and *kresivo* (steel used for procuring fire), *kresat* ('strike fire'), to Slovenian *kresiti* ('shine, sparkle'), and 'revive'), *kres* ('solstice,' Midsummer Day), Serbian and Croatian *krijes* (fire on the eve of St. John's Day), and Slovakian *kresnik* ('June'). According to some evidence, *kres* also meant 'fire' [40a, p. 97].

Consequently, the Russian *krest*, like the sign of the cross itself, is not Christian in origin; it is an ancient word associated with pre-Christian beliefs. It can be stated definitely to which particular beliefs the Russian word for 'cross' and its parallels in other Indo-European languages are related: the semantic connection of these words with the notions "fire" and "summer solstice" point to the cult of the Neolithic earth god. The word *krasny* ('red') is an adjective of the word *kres* [337, p. 207]; this can be accounted for by the fact that the red color was associated with the underworld god. The word for 'cross' derives from the name of the underworld god in other languages, too, such as: the Georgian *džvar* may be compared to *Assur*, *yašcer* ('dragon'), *čur* (ancient Slavic idol), and the Sumerian *zabar* ('metal'); the Armenian *hač* to the Armenian name for the demon *kaž*.

Proceeding from the fact that the cross, whatever interpretation was given it in the 2nd—1st millennia B.C., was formerly a symbol of the underworld god, one can discern the original semantics of the mythological image of the fiery bird and of the bird associated with the cross (Fig.

180); it is possible that the corresponding association goes back to the Paleolithic (Fig. 179: 2).

Conventional etymologies of the name Phoenix may be perceived as indicating the solar origin of the image. The Greek word *phoinikes* meant 'east,' whence the name *Phoenicia* ('country in the east') and *Phoenix dactylifera* ('date' — fruit from the east). However, the name of the Phoenix, which had parallels in Egypt (Bennu) and in China (Feng-huang) seems to come from the name of the underworld god: *f.n. b.n.*b.r.* The name of Phoenix may also be related to the Prussian mythicized image of fire, Paniks, to the name of the Roman deity of water springs, Fons (and the latter to the Greek Pan, goat-like god of shepherds).¹⁶⁵ The scheme *f.n. b.n.*b.r.* is also confirmed by other examples: the Latin *fontāna* ('water spring'); the name of the Japanese goddess of love and fertility Benten (**b.n.+t*) born of the sea, like the Greek Aphrodite.

The ancient Hebrews called Phoenix Šul. This word, resembling the Indo-European *sol* ('sun'), may be taken as pointing to the solar nature of Phoenix. However, it also resembles the Hebrew *šēol* ('underworld'). Study of the term *š.l.* leads to the image of the Neolithic thundergod, the god of the underworld.¹⁶⁶ The Žar-ptitsa (Fire-bird) of Russian fairy tales is considered an analogue of Phoenix [465, p. 68]. But while the ancients started to identify the bird Phoenix with the sun in the first millennium B.C. when sun worship became an established practice in Western Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean, this never happened in the case of Žar-ptitsa; there is no evidence in Slavic tradition of its relation to the sun. Nor do the characteristics of the Egyptian Bennu suggest a dependable relation to the sun: he is described as a radiant bird with

golden or red wings. This could well be an image of the fiery underworld god who rose into the sky. The Russian Fire-bird possesses certain features which associate it with the fiery serpent [371a, p. 439]; the name of the ancient Mexican deity Kečal-Koatl, symbolized by a cross, means "bird-serpent"; to this may be added that the divine serpent was an incarnation of light in the civilizations of pre-Columbian America [528a, p. 92]. Legends of the Yuraks, a Siberian ethnic group, mention a mythical "lightning-bird" [671, p. 128]. The ancient image of the "thunder bird" is incorporated in the United States national emblem, the eagle with arrows in its claws.

The description of Phoenix as "immortal" is characteristic of the Neolithic Great God, i.e., the earth god. Though authors of Classical Antiquity referred to Phoenix as a sun bird, this identification does not always follow from the myths. The Romans dedicated their Phoenix to Venus [638, p. 270]; Venus does not in any way relate to the sun, she is a survival of the archaic Great Goddess, being a deity of sensual love, and also because the planet Venus represented this Neolithic goddess.¹⁶⁷

It follows from all this that the fire bird was originally an image of the underworld god, and that the cross, correlated with the bird, was the symbol of that god. When fundamental changes in beliefs took place with the downfall of Neolithic culture, the fire bird came to be perceived as an incarnation of the sun, and the cross, which symbolized it, became a solar symbol.

¹⁶⁵ V. Ivanov believes that the Latin *fōns* and the Iranian *dānu*, *don* for 'water, river' originate from **d(h)en* ('move rapidly') [108, p. 671].

¹⁶⁶ See chapter "The White God."

¹⁶⁷ See chapter "Stars."

THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

Crosses occur abundantly in monuments of Western Asian and European early farming cultures (Fig. 192: 1-5). However, in that period the cross did not designate the sun; its origin and semantics were otherwise.

The cross-pieces of Tripolye altars were oriented towards the four directions of the horizon [468a, p. 32]. This tradition long outlasted the Neolithic religion: a medieval pagan altar with four projections pointing to the four directions was found in Kiev [76, p. 6]. Idols of Slavic Sventovit, Greek Hermes, Roman Mercury, and Indian Brahma, Varuna, and Šiva had four faces looking in the four directions. Such an idol was also found in the Southern Caucasus (Fig. 192: 7). The four directions symbolized "all four quarters" of the earth, and the four-faced idol must originally have been the image of the god of the "entire earth."

The word for the cross is of masculine gender in various languages. The fact that the cross correlates with the phallus [371b, pp. 12, 13; 730a, p. 385] points to its connection with the Neolithic earth god, since later mythological personages of phallic and generally male character lead back to the image of this god. In Babylon, the cross was associated not

only with the sun god Šamaš, but also with the elemental waters in the realm of the god of the lower universe. The cross was the symbol of Scandinavian Freyr, who possessed quite a few characteristics of the Neolithic god of earth and thunder.

A pagan rite of blessing cattle was practised in old Russia. It consisted in throwing twice an axe over the cattle, so that the trajectories formed a cross; the owner performed the rite wearing a fur coat with the fur outside [310, p. 49]. The fur was a way of likening man to beast, as the earth god was pictured, the axe being his attribute; therefore, the cross was his symbol.

Noteworthy in this connection is yet another old Russian custom. At times of cattle epidemics, four sick animals, tied together by their tails (which thus formed a cross), were driven to the village square, stoned to death (the stone having been an attribute of the earth god), and then burnt (fire being an incarnation of the earth god) [197, p. 67]. The meaning of this rite was evidently to give the god what he had chosen and thus propitiate him.

American Indians painted crosses on the doors of their houses in order to prevent the dead from coming back

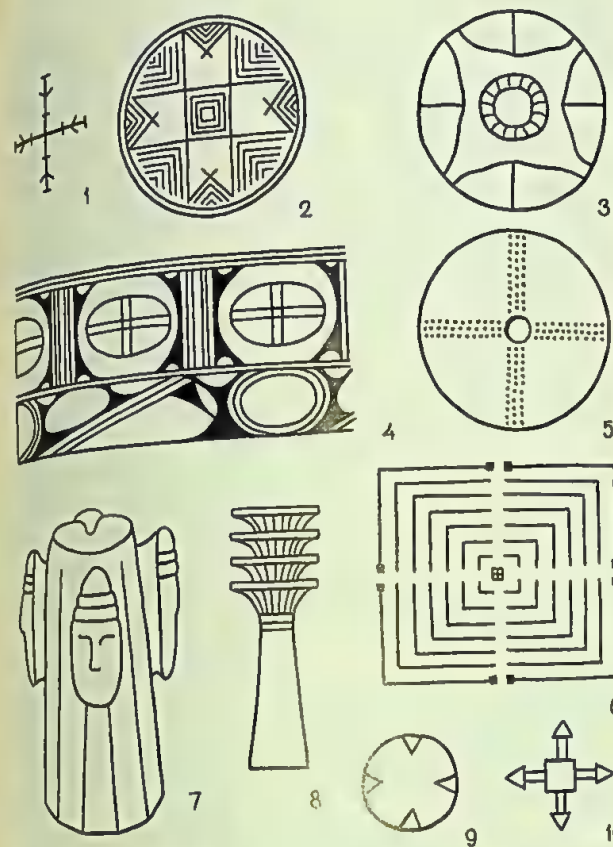


Fig. 192. Fourfold symbols: 1, 2 — Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, Neolithic [381a, pp. 226, 209]; 3 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [794, pl. 10]; 4 — Ukraine, Tripolye culture [696, p. 103]; 5 — Prussia, Neolithic [840, p. 83]; 6 — plan of a temple in Shrirangham, India; 7 — Armenia, ca 1000 BC [170, p. 226]; 8 — Egypt, ca 2000 BC [774, p. 92]; 9, 10 — archaic hieroglyphs in Egypt and China.

[730a, p. 386]. This rite apparently meant that the deceased had gone to the god symbolized by the cross and became his.

The Indians sacrificed human beings by tying victims to a cross; this rite was timed for the period of sowing [558, p. 478]. The cross was undoubtedly a symbol of the earth god, and the sacrifice was offered to him in order to obtain rich crops. This throws light on the origin of the Roman method of execution. Crucifixion does not necessarily require nailing to the cross. In fact, the Romans, who had forgotten the initial meaning of the crucifixion, replaced the cross with a simpler device in the form of a pole with a cross-piece at the top. It seems that killing on the cross was originally a sacrifice to a deity symbolized by the cross, rather than execution, and had the same meaning as burying alive or committing the victim to the flames (i.e., offering a sacrifice to the god of earth and fire). But inasmuch as it was cheapest to use a criminal as a victim (he had to be put to death anyway), the rite acquired the significance of punishing a criminal so that the execution came to be regarded as a disgrace.

Numerous examples illustrate the association between the conception of the four directions of the earth and the number four correlated with the idea of divinity. The symbolic number four was materialized in the Judaic phylacteries, small square boxes containing slips inscribed with four Scriptural passages. The phylactery worn on the forehead

bears the Hebrew letter for the sound š (the first letter in the word *šaddai*), of an unusual four-headed shape, and the knot of braids is shaped like the letter *daleth*, the fourth in the Hebrew alphabet. The number four figures repeatedly in the Passover ritual, and four symbolic plants are a feature of the festival of Succoth.

It was suggested in chapter "The Bull-Moon" that Monday, the first day of the week, was dedicated to the moon god, for the numeral 1 was associated with the moon imagined as a one-horned bull that incarnated the earth deity. The fourth day of the week was dedicated to the thundergod, the underworld god. The Svans and Megrelians (Georgian ethnic groups) have the word *č'aš* for Thursday, where š is a suffix; it was mentioned elsewhere in this book that in some Caucasian languages *č'a* has the meanings 'deity, dwelling, fire,' which suggests that in ancient times it applied to the underworld god incarnated by fire, who patronized the human dwelling. Consequently, Thursday is this god's day. This was probably why the cross was painted on the bottom of vessels — the sign was a symbol of the underworld deity.

Some authors believe that the notion "the four directions of the earth" existed as far back as the Paleolithic. This may well be true, although so far there are no sufficient grounds to support such a conclusion. Positive evidence of the existence of the notion dates back to at least the Neolithic. Neolithic materials comprise large numbers of crosses providing data for interpreting the cross sign as representing the four major directions of the horizon and as an emblem of the earth god. The earth symbol of a crossed square suggests that the notion "four points of the earth" was associated with the notion "four lands of the world" or "four regions of the earth." Also popular at that time was the grapheme of a crossed disk. In some cases (Fig. 192: 2) it is a combination of the symbols of heaven (the circle with triangles representing clouds) and of earth (the cross with a square representing sacred mountain), whereas in others (Fig. 192: 4, 5) it seems to express the concept "four regions of the world" applied to heaven rather than to earth.

That the grapheme of a disk with a cross could serve as a heaven symbol is confirmed by the following examples. The archaic Egyptian hieroglyph for 'town' is a disk with an inscribed cross or markings of the four major directions of the horizon (Fig. 192: 9). A conventional Assyrian representation of a military camp, dating back to the beginning of the first millennium B.C., is a circle with a cross [818, p. 203]. An Assyrian bas-relief represents the town of Kalah by the conventional sign of a circle with a cross [621, p. 8] (the town in fact had a different plan). Medieval (8-9th century) Baghdad was built on a plan of this symbol; it is described as a circle with a radius somewhat longer than one kilometer and two diametrically intersecting streets. One and a half thousand years earlier (10-8th centuries B.C.), the Hittite-Syrian town of Samal (Sendshirli) had a regular circle of fortification walls. Other examples, such as plans of ancient Roman cities and medieval Chinese capitals based on rectangles with an inscribed cross, indicate that the urban idea was associated with the earth god's image. It may be assumed that while in some cases people sought benevolence on the part of

the lord of the earth, in others they looked to the heaven mistress (later master) for protection. For example, ancient Slavs used to plow a furrow around their villages; the rite was actually performed by naked women and was intended as magic. The circle and the naked women are ritual elements associated with the image of the Great Goddess, the heaven goddess.

An ancient tradition inherited by medieval Christianity comprises the notion of a "heavenly city," implying an idyllic abode. For this reason European 15th and 16th century representations of Jerusalem were based on concentric circles in plan. According to a legend reported by Plato, the capital of Atlantis was built in concentric circles. In Campanella's *City of the Sun* the ideal city has concentric circles with an inscribed cross in plan.

In most cases, however, the notion "four directions, four points of the world" was related to earth rather than heaven, and the cross sign, so far as it can be interpreted, at no time symbolized the heaven goddess. The Hittite and Babylonian notion of the "four directions of the world" was associated with the "king of the world," the sun god [190, p. 281]; this concept dates back to the second millennium B.C.

The notion of the four directions was not merely an expression of bearings; it was correlated with fabulous conceptions of the structure of the universe. According to Egyptian myths, the heaven god Horus had four sons, sometimes referred to as "pillars of the world." The emblem of Osiris (Fig. 192: 8) is a representation of these four pillars. In Mayan mythology, heaven rests on four corner pillars, in addition to a fifth one at the center [241, p. 1]. Four sacred pillars representing the four directions of the world were dedicated to deities worshiped by Slavs and by inhabitants of Ancient India [198, pp. 26, 27].

W. Müller lists evidence to the effect that the entire world and its individual territories (countries, cities) were pictured in ancient times as consisting of four parts [781, pp. 93-111]. Assyrian kings and the Inca rulers of Ancient Peru both referred to their respective empires as the "Four Quarters of the World"; this must have meant "the entire world, the whole earth." The Akkadian ruler Naram-Sin (about 2550 B.C.) was referred to as "the mighty king of the four quarters." In Cambodia, one observes quadrangular towers with the face of a king sculptured on each side, symbolizing the royal power supposed to extend over "all four corners of the earth."

The Paleolithic necklace with a cruciform pendant unearthed near Malta in Siberia, mentioned in the preceding chapter, suggests the possibility that the cross was a cult symbol during the Paleolithic and that it derived from the bird image. There is no data for the semantics of the bird image in the Paleolithic. In subsequent epochs, however, we know of a mythopoetical image of the firebird, perceived as an incarnation of the underworld god risen to the sky. Neolithic materials show that the cross was at that time regarded as expressing the notion of the four directions, corners, parts of the earthly world, and therefore the symbol of the earth god. Further, various cruciform bird representations existed both in the Neolithic and later. Thus, the cross as a symbol of the god of the earth and the underworld derives from both the bird image and the

designation of the four directions. The possibility remains that the latter is associated with the former in origin and that the very concept of the four directions took shape under the influence of the cross as a symbol of the earth god. This hypothesis does not seem strange if one takes into account numerous other instances when the form of an abstract symbol caused mythicization of an object.

The cross as an emblem of the earth god implies that he is the lord of the entire earth. At the same time some of the four directions were particularly related to this god's image. For instance, it was believed that the west was his dwelling place (apparently because the entrance to the underworld was supposed to be located in the west). The north was also associated with him, presumably because the North Star situated in the center of the sky (the starlit firmament rotates around it) could be pictured as a trace of an arrow-phallus hitting the target of the disk-heaven. In Assyro-Babylonia, the North Star was regarded as male, the spouse of the heaven goddess, and was represented by the phallic symbol [678, p. 13].

In a Hindu tradition, the sacred mountain Meru, the center of the earth, is situated "in the very north," under the North Star which is the center of the sky. In ancient times the northern wind was allegorically represented by black horses or by a winged bull [730a, p. 259]. Boreas, the god of the north wind in Greek mythology, is a relic of the archaic underworld god, judging by his name and certain characteristics of his image.¹⁶⁸ In many cultures the "north" became endowed with supernatural attributes. Ancient Greeks and pagan Semites believed that the north was the mountainous abode of the divine. The prophets expected both destruction and mercy to come from that direction. The north was identified with wealth. In Ancient Israel the sacrificial animal was slain at the north side of the altar. Some ancient Palestinian sanctuaries were oriented northwards [446, p. 276]. Some early churches in Western Europe have entrance doors on the northern side, so that the devil can be driven out through them [756, p. 38]. The word for "north" is taboo in some languages, like the appellations for bear and wolf, animals representing the earth god. In the Ubykian language, the words for "hell" and "north" derive from the same root. The Nanaians use the same word for "North Star" and "lord of the lower world." Some myths portray the Great Bear constellation as a stag or elk pursued by the hunter, the North Star. The North Star was associated with the underworld in Siberia and in Mesopotamia. In Ancient Egypt, the Great Bear constellation was imaged as a demon with a bull head and was associated with Seth, "the lord of the lower world" [639, p. 243]. In China, the spiral, i.e., the sign of the snake-earth, served as a symbol of the Great Bear constellation [756, p. XIII]. The constellation referred to as the Great She-bear or the Great He-bear in various

¹⁶⁸T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov are of the opinion that the etymological association of the Greek Boreas with the word for the mountain and the use of the word *gora* ('mountain') to designate the north wind in Slavic languages should be accounted for by the circumstance that in the region originally inhabited by Proto-Indo-Europeans, the north wind blew from mountainous areas [108, p. 678]. However, in the region, which the above authors name as the ancient homeland of the Proto-Indo-Europeans (the Armenian Highland), people lived among mountains, not south of them.

languages must have been associated with the earth god and heaven goddess, because in spring it points to the east, in summer to the south, in autumn to the west, and in winter to the north, being a visual representation of the concept of the four directions of the world and of the four seasons, as a spatial and temporal embodiment of the two deities, the masters of the world.

A temple in India has seven walled rectangles inscribed within each other in plan, with entrances in the middle of each wall and the altar at the center (Fig. 192: 6). The pattern of the plan of this structure is a combination of two earth symbols: one of inscribed rectangles and the other of a crossed rectangle, a diagram of the earth consisting of four parts. Ancient Indian urban treatises maintain that a city must have two intersecting main streets oriented according to the four directions. Ancient Indian cosmogony divides the earthly world into four by the directions of the compass, with the sacred mountain at the center [780, p. 485]. This model of the world was allegorically realized in the designs of sacred areas in medieval Cambodia and Central America: the step pyramid was placed at the intersection of two main lines oriented east-west and north-south.

This layout was at the basis root of plans of "sacred towns" — royal capitals considered centers of the world. Angkor-Tom, the ancient capital of Cambodia, built in the 9th—14th centuries, was a three kilometer square surrounded by a stone wall, with two intersecting main streets oriented to the four points of the earth, and a step pyramid at the center. The Aztec capital Tenochtitlan looked very much the same [780, pp. 477, 481]. Royal capitals in medieval China were also rectangular in plan with two crossing main streets. These main roads were extremely wide, sometimes more than a hundred meters, which could not have been due to any practical need (as was not their orientation to the four corners of the earth or the square shape of the plan surrounded by straight stone walls extending for kilometers). Archeologists have discovered a Central Asian structure dating from the first millennium B.C., which was a wall around a rectangular area oriented to the four quarters of the world, six by seven kilometers long and entirely empty inside [637, p. 11]. A Chinese treatise of the third to second centuries B.C. says that a capital city must be square in plan, with sides nine-li long, that the territory of the city must be divided by nine meridional and nine latitudinal streets, and that the width of the streets must equal nine times the width of a wheel vehicle [82, p. 188] (nine is a numerical symbol of the underworld god).

Etruscan priests performed a ritual for laying the foundation of a town: they drew a cross on the ground with its arms pointing in the four directions of the compass [818, p. 72] (the cross was purely symbolic; only one Etruscan city is known to have been cruciform in plan). The ritual was later assimilated by the Romans, who marked two intersecting main streets oriented in the four directions of the world when laying out military camps; in some Roman towns the two main streets also formed a cross in plan.

Not only the cross with arms extended in the four directions is characteristic of the above layouts, but also certain outlines of the city, settlement, and military camp.

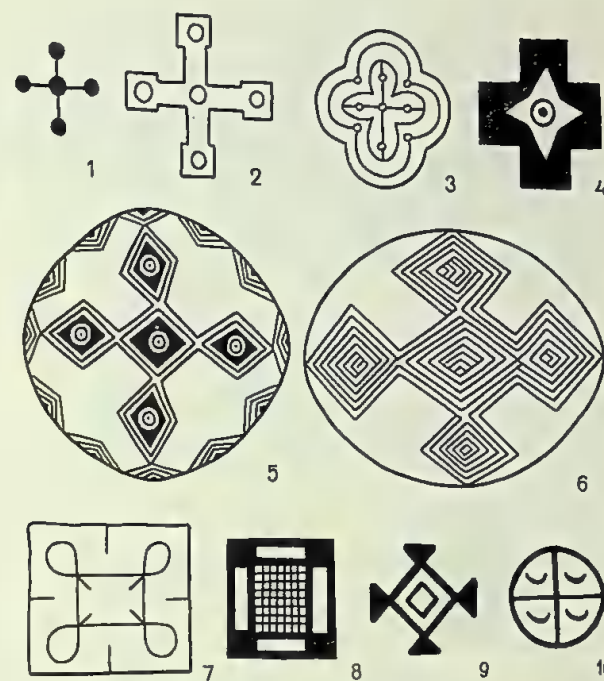


Fig. 193. Symbol of the four corners of the world, Neolithic: 1 — Southern Turkmenia [572, p. 16]; 2 — Czechoslovakia [694, p. 292]; 3 — Central Europe [696, p. 90]; 4—6 — Asia Minor [764b, pp. 350, 395, 409]; 7 — sign on a stone, Daghestan, Urada [376, p. 272]; 8 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 48]; 9 — Asia Minor [764, p. 350]; 10 — China [535, p. 119].

These outlines frequently formed a square, occasionally a circle, and in the majority of cases a rectangle. The earliest known step towers — ziggurats in Mesopotamia and the Zoser Pyramid and the vast majority of graphic *babylon* symbols which, as will be shown later, are symbols of the earth deity (Figs. 269, 270), are rectangular rather than square in plan. It is noteworthy that the sky, too, was in some cases designated by an oval rather than a circle (Figs. 192: 4, and also 36: 4; 50: 4, 6; 53: 6-10; 104: 8, 9; 157: 3; 176: 3; 207: 2). Most probably, the universe as well as its major constituents — earth and heaven — was not perceived as centric, but somewhat elongated, oblong in shape.¹⁶⁹

The symbolic relationship between the notions of human settlement and of the four directions was quite common in the ancient world, judging, for example, by the fact that cruciform signs served as hieroglyphs for 'town' in both Egypt and China (Fig. 192: 9, 10).

W. Müller, who has made a study of this subject and collected interesting evidence pertaining to it, believed that city planning was based on a conception of the structure of the universe, that microcosm was identified with macrocosm [779, p. 62; 781, p. 179]. This explanation, however, does not throw much light on the original cause, for it remains unclear why this was done.

It is likely that the ritual which involved marking the cross as a symbol of the earth god on the surface of the ground when laying out a town, and the realization of this cross as two intersecting main thoroughfares, was addressed to the awe-inspiring god to ensure his benevolent

¹⁶⁹Was this because it sprang from an egg?

attitude to settlements and military encampments built on the ground, i.e., "on him". There were also other ways of influencing the earth god. In ancient times (and in the Middle Ages) various peoples (including European) offered sacrifices to the earth when constructing houses, temples, and bridges: human beings, preferably children, were buried alive.

The "building sacrifice" is known worldwide, including Africa and pre-Columbian America. Not in all cases were the sacrificial offerings human. It was common practice to place an animal or part of its body, or an object believed to be connected with the earth god, beneath the foundation. Such were usually a horse, a bull, a hog, a he-goat, a dog, a cat, an egg, a stone [183, pp. 12-27].¹⁷⁰

Various cruciform designs were used to decorate Neolithic ceramics. Analysis shows that they are not chance combinations; they always express the same notion in a certain way. Let us consider, for example, the cross composed of rhombuses (Fig. 193: 5, 6). Each of its five elements is an earth sign. In this case the design represents five particular lands. The element in the center is a specific locality surrounded by the "four quarters of the world," the "four lands," i.e., the remaining part of the world. Other cruciform figures (Fig. 193: 7-9), similar to these very old ones, seem to have the same meaning.

In Ancient India, a sacred area was enclosed with a fence furnished with four gates arranged in keeping with the four directions. Not infrequently, however, gates were erected alone, without the fence. The gates had a symbolic meaning: set around a certain plot of ground and oriented to the four directions, they must have expressed a cosmogonic conception that the "four quarters" constituting the remaining world extend beyond the given territory. Whatever the reason, gates had a ritual significance in various cultures. The Hittites had special gates to mark the boundary between sacred and secular territories; they also had a "god of the gates." The Druids attached mystic significance to an entrance, to gates [865, p. 111]. Ancient Egyptian temples had hypertrophied façade walls whose shapes emphasized the gate. The Romans built symbolic gates ("arches"). In Buddhism, too, gates possess a symbolic cult significance. Symbolic gates were constructed in pre-Columbian America [371a, p. 524]. Pagan Germanic tribes erected ritual gates [721, p. 82]. Words for "entrance, passage" in Indo-European and Kartvelian (Georgia) languages have the root *i.r/d.r* which is one of the names for the earth god. As will be shown later, the Roman Janus, identified with doors, gates, originated in the image of the Neolithic earth god.

The expression "south, north, west, east, and the middle of the earth" recurs in Egyptian texts dating from the third millennium B.C. [766a, p. 246]. A similar conception of the structure of the inhabited world existed in the second millennium B.C. in China; the world was believed to consist of "four quarters" and a central part containing the "sacred city," in this case "the great city of Shang," the residence of the rulers of the Yin state. When the lands of the state were listed, its five parts were mentioned: four peripheral

¹⁷⁰ We have here two motifs of sacrifice: either food for the deity, or creatures (objects) regarded as incarnations of the deity.

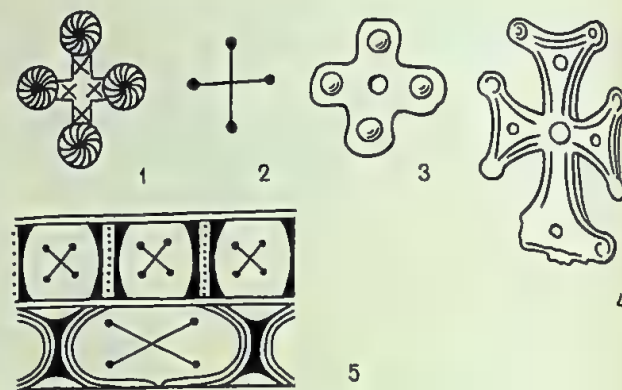


Fig. 194. Cross with dots at the four tips: 1 — Georgia, 17th–18th centuries [589, pl. 3]; 2 — Daghestan and North Ossetia, Middle Ages; 3 — Volga region, ca 800 BC [496, pl. 17]; 4 — Daghestan, ca 800 [33d, p. 160]; 5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [696, p. 103].

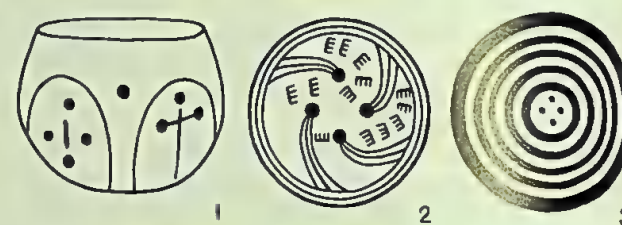


Fig. 195. Four dots in circle, Neolithic: 1 — Germany [859, p. 57]; 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [468b, p. 16]; 3 — Asia Minor [764b, p. 138].

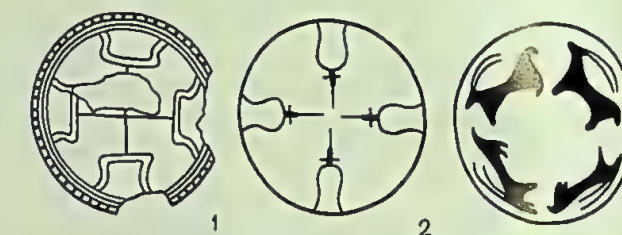


Fig. 196. Fourfold sign of bull or goat: 1, 2 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [544, p. 50; 763, p. 109]; 3 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [765, p. 193].

and one central [267, pp. 268, 269]. In Aztec myths, the universe is divided into four quarters and a middle region [371a, p. 521]; the same conception was shared by the Indians who once populated the present territory of the United States [730a, p. 576].

It is inconceivable that these ideas could have emerged independently in Egypt, China, and pre-Columbian America. Their genesis must be accounted for in terms of the cosmogonic concept of the early farming cultures. In the third millennium B.C., painted pottery appeared in China, which looked strikingly like the Neolithic ceramics of Western Asia and Southeastern Europe; the technique of decorating the vessels, the shapes and painted designs are similar [267, Figs. 5, 6]. Some students of this phenomenon are of the opinion that painted ceramics were introduced into China as a result of migrations from the West. Others reject the explanation of similarity by the diffusion of ideas [267, p. 144], but, as is often the case, they do not offer any reasonable alternative explanation.

In one of the above designs (Fig. 193: 5) each of the "five

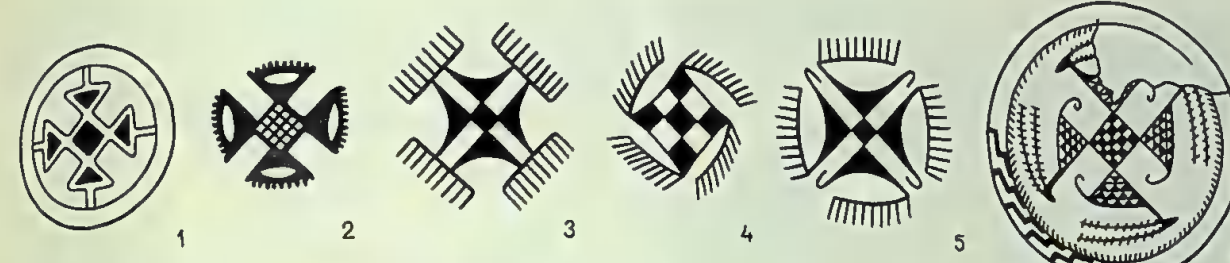


Fig. 197. Fourfold sign of goats around square: 1 — Ukraine, Middle Ages [217, fig. 62]; 2 — Mesopotamia, ca 3000 BC [353, p. 165]; 3–6 — Iran, 4000–3000 BC [716, pp. 24, 25].

lands" is marked by an earth symbol — a rhombus with a dot. Hence, probably (at any rate, associated with it) is the cross with five dots, at the ends and at the intersection (Fig. 193: 1). Of interest in this connection is an altar in the form of a large cross laid in stone, with vessels (for kindling fires? for sacrificial offerings?) embedded in the masonry at the ends and at the intersection of the cross (Fig. 193: 2); the cross is oriented north-south and east-west. It was built during the Bronze period, but this image can be traced back to older traditions.

More commonly encountered is the cross with four dots at the ends and without the dot at the center (Fig. 194: 2). The extent to which this symbol was venerated can be illustrated by the fact that in Daghestan it decorated a cover of the Koran (compare this to the cross on the cover of the Gospels). The sign figures in Ossetia on artifacts covering the period from the Bronze Age [537, Table 49] to the Middle Ages [246, Fig. 24]. It was common in Ancient Greece [859, p. 26], India [858, p. 49], and pre-Columbian America [596, p. 37]. During the festival of Succoth observant Jews read a benediction while raising a bunch of symbolic plants, then lowering it, then moving it to the left and to the right, as though marking four points in space.

It is possible that the four-dot sign found on Neolithic monuments (Fig. 195) is semantically associated with the cruciform sign with dots at the ends. In the examples shown in Figure 195 this sign occurs among combs (the rain sign), within the semioval (the cloud sign), and within concentric circles (the heaven sign). It therefore expresses the notion of something which occurs in heaven or is a symbol of earth combined with a heaven symbol.

B. Rybakov deciphers the design shown in Figure 195: 2 as four teats of the heavenly cow pouring out rain like milk. Generally speaking, this interpretation raises no objections, for these dots are shown in the sky, rain was compared to cow milk in popular traditions, and the goddess was pictured as a cow. In this case, the sign of the four points connected crosswise may be a composite symbol combining the signs of the heaven goddess (four teats) and the earth (the cross). However, no completely convincing interpretation of the four-dots symbol can so far be made.

Neolithic bowls decorated with schematic bull images arranged crosswise (Fig. 196: 1, 2) have been found in Northern Mesopotamia. The bull is one of the earth god's incarnations. Consequently, this design is a variant of the "four quarters" symbol. As the bull and the moon have

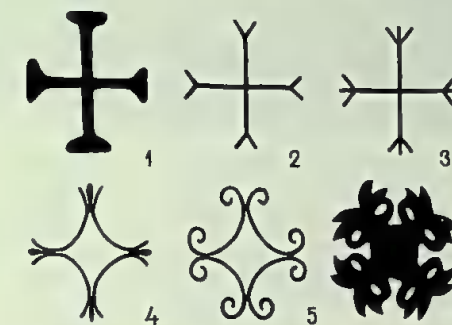


Fig. 198. "Flourishing cross" and "flourishing square": 1 — Daghestan, Urada; 2 — Daghestan, Khushkada; 3 — Chechenia; 4 — North Ossetia; 5 — medieval Russia; 6 — North Ossetia.

identical implied meanings, the composition consisting of four moons arranged crosswise seen on ceramic vessels dating from the third millennium B.C. in Rumania and China (Fig. 193: 10), must also have the same meaning. The picture depicting four goats (Fig. 196: 3) had the same semantics, because the he-goat, like the bull, personified the earth deity in the early farmers' beliefs.

Numerous designs on Neolithic pottery in Iran portray in a more or less schematic fashion four he-goats around a rhombus (Fig. 197). In an interpretation of these designs V. Masson refers to A. Parrot [792] who believed that the picture represented four goats around a water basin. However, this does not explain the persistent images of four goats and the supposed presence of water. The square or the rhombus designated earth rather than bodies of water in ancient ideographs. The four he-goats are four earth symbols. The composition in question is an ideograph of the notion "our locality and the four quarters of the world," i.e., "the entire world, the whole earth."

Terrestrial vegetation is semantically similar to earth in Neolithic cult symbolism. These notions (and the deities personifying earth and vegetation) were not infrequently identified with one another. "Four quarters of the world" could therefore be expressed graphically not only in terms of earth signs, but also through plant signs (Fig. 192: 1). Symbols of this type came into being during the Neolithic and became prototypes for the graphemes "flourishing cross" and "flourishing square," widespread in ancient times and quite popular in medieval and more recent decorative art, in particular, in the Northern Caucasus and Russia (Fig. 198).

Ram horns symbolized vegetation. This led to the emergence of ideographs of the "four quarters of the world" composed of the sign of earth (cross or square) and four pairs of spirals attached to it (Fig. 199). Ideographs of this

THE FOUR SEASONS

The ornamentation on the Neolithic cult object shown in Figure 202: 1 is a common combination of the earth (the cross) and heaven (a circle with teeth) signs. Here the number of teeth is twelve — three in each of the four sectors between the arms of the cross. In Figure 202: 3 three dots appear between each pair of cross arms. These twelve signs, three in each of the four sectors of the disk, may well be an ideograph of the notion "four seasons of the year".

The four-partite design in Figure 202: 8 supports this assumption. It cannot be ruled out that the dissimilar finials of this cross refer to the directions of the horizon, but it seems more likely that they symbolize the four seasons: the plant with small shoots may designate spring, the plant with fully developed branches may be fall, and the triangles would be the rainy season, which is winter in Egypt.

A Neolithic earthenware disk from Rumania (Fig. 202: 4) displays a set of various hieroglyphs in each of the four

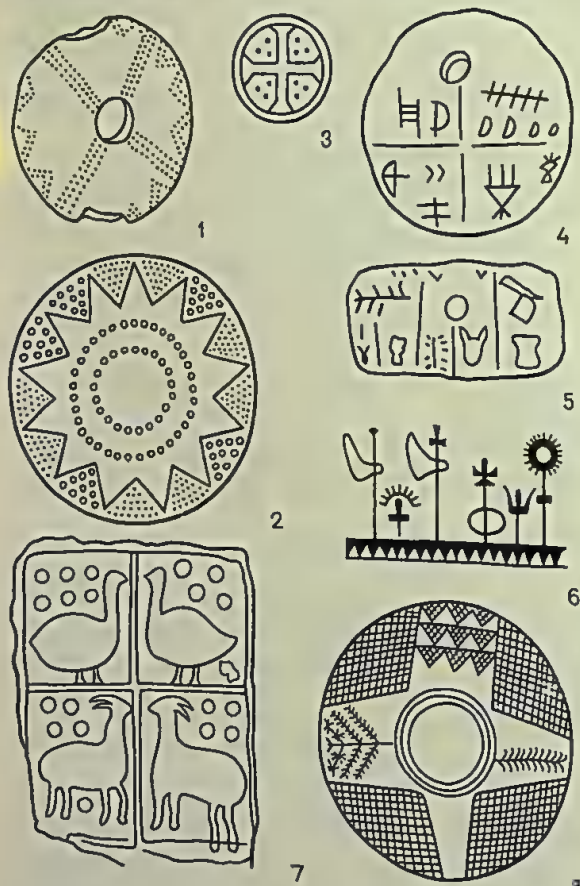


Fig. 202. Calendar graphemes: 1 — Baltic region, ca 3000 BC [840, pl. 83]; 2 — Hungary, ca 1000 BC [747, pl. 62]; 3 — Mycenae, ca 2000 BC [787, p. 359]; 4, 5 — Rumania, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 88]; 6 — Scandinavia, 18th c. [228b, p. 111]; 7 — Sumer [869, fig. 128]; 8 — Egypt, ca 4000 BC [794, pl. 15].

sectors. This inscription seems to fit the notion of the four seasons, rather than represent the four directions of the compass.

The composition in Figure 202: 5, which belongs to the same archeological culture, is undoubtedly a calendary grapheme. Its structural similarity to the Scandinavian folk calendar reinforces this supposition (Fig. 202: 6).

The design in Figure 202: 2 may have symbolized the thirteen month leap year which compensated for the twelve lunar months' failure to coincide with the annual movement of the sun, while Figure 202: 7 designates the four seasons constituting two halves of the year (a specific feature of some ancient calendars).

As one endeavors to understand the meaning of a particular four-part symbol, to determine whether it designates the four directions or the four seasons, it must be remembered that neither of these alternatives rules out the other. An association between the spatial and temporal parameters of the universe is characteristic of many ancient cultures. Scholars have pointed out that different peoples, from the extreme west of Europe to China, connected the notions of the four directions and the four seasons [756, pp. 29, 34; 198, p. 29]. The four directions were associated with the four parts of the year and of the twenty-four hour period. Southern countries were referred to in Russia as "midday" and northern as "midnight" ones. In Germany to this day the epithet for western countries is "evening" and for eastern ones "morning." The Hebrew words for "west" and "evening" are of the same root. In Ancient Egypt, the deity of the setting sun was called Atum, which sounds very much like the Latin *autumnus* ("autumn, fall"); if the two go back to some word in the unknown Neolithic language, it would mean that the west was associated with autumn. Indeed, both in ancient Europe and in China autumn was associated with the west [730a, p. 160]. As the path of the cosmic stag was westerly, the image of the deer served as a symbol of autumn [730a, p. 425].

The symbol of four little circles, sometimes with a dot inside, was widespread since the Bronze Age (Fig. 203). This grapheme is undoubtedly connected with the Neolithic sign

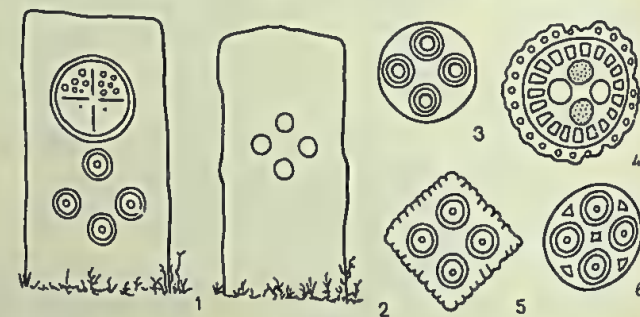


Fig. 203. Sign of four disks: 1 — grave stela in Daghestan, Dabgash; 2 — stela in Chechnia [47, p. 40]; 3 — sign on a carved stone of a tower, Daghestan, Tidib [377, p. 193]; 4 — Latvia, ca 500 CE [556, p. 23]; 5, 6 — Syria and Western Iran, Neolithic [716, pp. 14, 15].

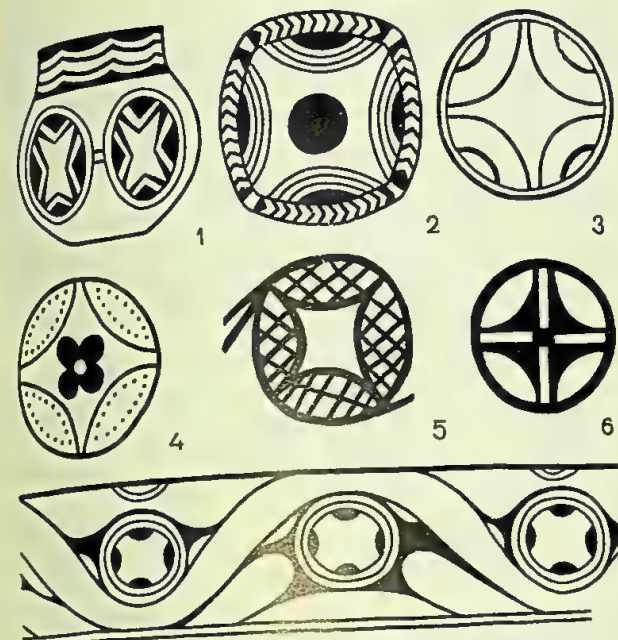


Fig. 204. Sign of four arches in circle, Neolithic: 1, 2 — Asia Minor, 6000–4000 BC [764a, p. 73; 764b, p. 408]; 3 — Bulgaria [381a, p. 209]; 4, 5 — Ancient Crete [676e, p. 92]; 6 — Elam [356, p. 448]; 7 — Ukraine, ca 3000 BC [696, p. 103].

of four dots. Its semantics underwent changes in later times. As new religious conceptions took hold, the disk, including a roundel with a dot in the center, came to designate the sun. The four little circles therefore symbolized four suns. Most probably, the ideograph expressed the idea of the four phases of the yearly solar cycle.

Beginning with the Neolithic and up to the twentieth century, a design of four arcs inscribed in a circle and directed towards a center was quite popular in the ornamentation of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus. In the oldest of such designs (Fig. 204: 1) triangles, rather than arcs, are inscribed in the disk; in this case the triangles should be regarded as designating rain clouds. The concentric lines of the arcs (Fig. 204: 2, 3) confirm that these are cloud signs. The combination of this ideograph with a cross or a cruciform flower (Fig. 204: 4, 6) may correspond semantically to other variants of heaven and earth combinations. If so, the disk with four arcs is a heaven symbol. It occupies the same place as other heaven symbols in designs on Tripolye pottery (Fig. 204: 7). The dots or the grid inside the arcs (Fig. 204: 4, 5) are signs of crops or of earth inside the cloud sign. This implies that the notion "four directions of the universe" applied not only to the terrestrial world, but also to the celestial one.

Since the Bronze Age the arc and the oval were apparently perceived as symbols of the rising sun. The sign with four arcs could thus have acquired the meaning of the ideograph of the four seasons. The signs of the rising sun were probably understood as the four solar positions which initiated the seasons of the yearly cycle, rather than the quarters of the year themselves.

Square stone slabs with strokes along the perimeter (Fig. 205: 2) have been found in medieval tombs in Ingushetia. The archeologist E. Krupnov does not hesitate to call them "signs of a game" [266, p. 189], though it is hard to imagine

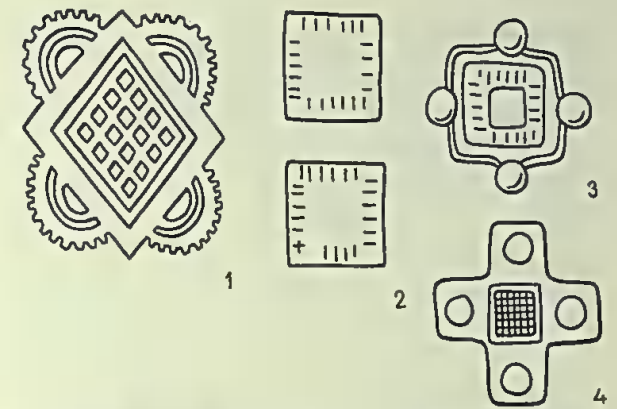


Fig. 205. Four suns around the earth: 1 — design on a grave stela, Daghestan, ca 1900; 2 — carved stones, Ingushetia, ca 1600 [266, p. 189]; 3 — design on a bracelet, Kiev, 12th c. [473, p. 96]; 4 — old Russian adornment, ca 1000 CE [485, pl. 7].

people praying for the souls of the dead while playing games. The ethnographers V. Basilov and V. Kobychiev are of the opinion that this is a calendar [52, p. 132], which seems closer to the truth. The square is an earth sign. The strokes along its sides are signs of rain semantically equivalent to four symbols of the rain cloud. As a matter of fact, ideographs with four designations of cloud or heaven around the square (Fig. 205: 1, 3, 4) are known. However, these must have been understood as solar signs since the Bronze Age. Therefore the entire ideograph reads "four suns and the earth." The four solar signs are presumably four yearly positions of the sun.

Since the Bronze Age, the ideograph of five disks, one in the center and four around it (Fig. 206) could hardly have meant anything other than "the sun and its four states." In Assyria, where the winged disk was a sign of the deity, it was sometimes depicted with five little circles inside, a central one surrounded by four others.

Remarkable in this connection is a Daghestanian representation of four minor suns around a major one (Fig. 207: 1): the four disks are joined in pairs. This probably implies that the four quarters of the year make up its two halves. An interesting design is engraved on a Daghestanian stela (Fig. 203: 1). The upper part seems to be a Neolithic sign of the "four regions of the world." But the four sectors of the disk are at the same time treated as two halves.

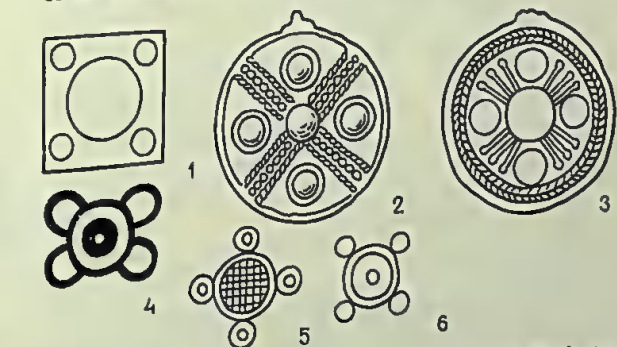


Fig. 206. Four states of the sun: 1 — engraved stone, Daghestan, Nijne Ishkarty; 2, 3 — Bronze Age pendants from Daghestan and North Ossetia [361, p. 147; 265, p. 39]; 4 — Mycenae [628, p. 158]; 5, 6 — pre-Columbian America [657, pls. 16, 9].

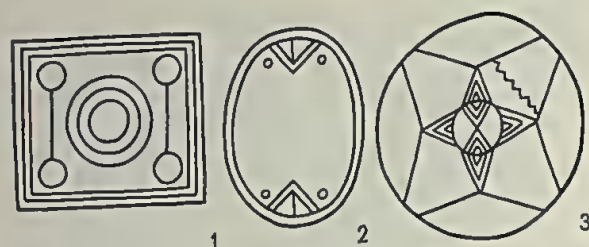


Fig. 207. Fourpartite and twopartite symbols: 1 — Daghestan, Itsari, 12th c.; 2 — Hungary, Bronze Age [694, p. 191]; 3 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 94].

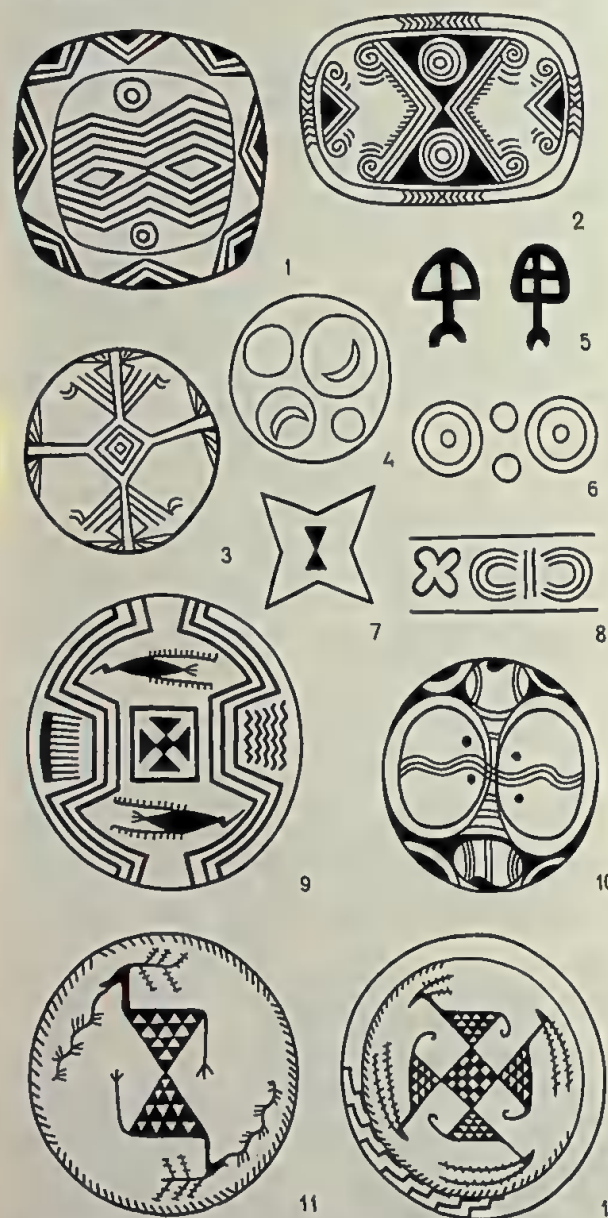


Fig. 208. Fourpartite and twopartite signs in Neolithic symbolism: 1-3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000-5000 BC [764b, pp. 408, 411, 407]; 4 — Ukraine, ca 3000 BC [579, p. 47]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [763, p. 78]; 6 — Syria, ca 5000 BC [701, fig. 51]; 7 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [765, p. 190]; 8, 9 — Elam, 3000-2000 BC [716, p. 73; 576, pl. 22]; 10 — Rumania, ca 3000 BC [696, p. 166]; 11, 12 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 3000 BC [701, figs. 40, 41].

Similarly, an early medieval plaque from the Baltic region (Fig. 203: 4) represents four disks as two pairs. A design from Tripolye (Fig. 63: 2) shows four moon signs arranged in pairs. These graphemes apparently express the notion that the year consists of four quarters or of two halves.

The Bronze Age produced other symbols in which four elements are divided into pairs (Fig. 207: 2) or four elements are combined with two others (Fig. 207: 3). The corresponding graphemes came into being as far back as the Neolithic (Fig. 208); their semantics is not clear. The meaning of these graphemes seems to be that something consists at the same time of four and of two parts.

It is possible that the various binary-quaternary symbols had dissimilar meanings. For example, while the notion "four quarters of the world" referred to the image of the earth god, the goddess of heaven was pictured as binary (ancient Egyptian texts mention "two heavenly regions"). A Sumerian double vessel resting on four bull figurines is of interest [701, Fig. 477]; perhaps one may assume that it symbolizes the structure of the world — "four earthly regions" and "two heavenly regions". Inasmuch as spatial divisions were associated with temporal, the binary-quaternary symbols might perhaps be connected with the subdivision of the year into two or four parts. But more study is necessary before these suppositions can be verified.

The Neolithic sign of four dots was examined above. It was assumed that the four dots designated the four teats of the "heavenly cow" which represented the heaven goddess. However, one circumstance may suggest a different meaning. Astronomers estimate that five to six millennia back, four large stars were situated at the points of the sky that mark the solstices and equinoxes [495, pp. 8, 9]. The four-dot sign was perhaps connected with the four time boundaries of the phases of the annual cycle.

If four dots designate solstices and equinoxes, and four suns symbolize the annual phases of the sun, the four suns divided by dots or reduced solar signs (Fig. 209: 2-5) are the four seasons divided by solstices and equinoxes.

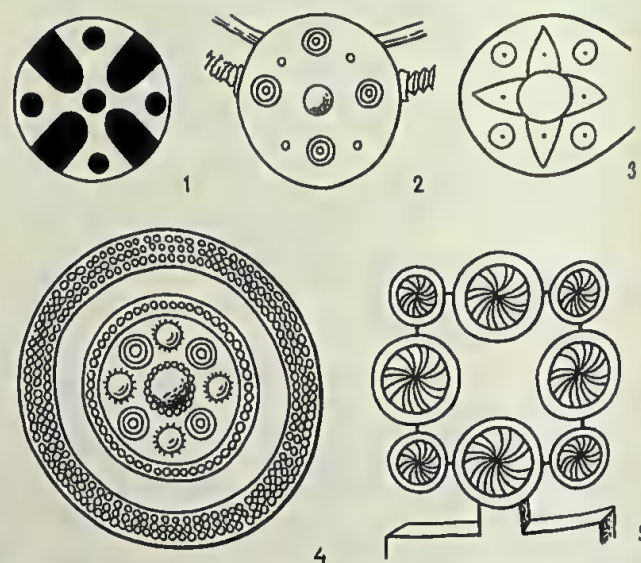


Fig. 209. Symbol "four and four": 1 — prehistoric Egypt [795, c. 59]; 2 — Volga region, ca 500 BC [496, pl. 17]; 3 — Bulgaria, Roman period [302, p. 226]; 4 — Georgia, ca 1500 BC [276, pl. 103]; 5 — Carpathian Ukraine, 19th c. [537, p. 20].

Similar designs existed as far back as the Neolithic (Fig. 209: 1). In this illustration, however, the four seasons (if this is the meaning of the grapheme) are represented by signs of the heaven goddess rather than the sun god, in line with the cult-cosmological conception of the early farmers' religion.

In the Rig-Veda, the year consists of twelve months and is divided into four quarters of three months each [97, p. 283]. A Russian manuscript of the seventeenth century reads that the seasons — spring, summer, fall, winter — are separated by the dates 24th March, 24th June, 24th September, and 24th December [438, pp. 202-204]. The Chechenes and Ingushes who belong to Caucasian rather than Indo-European ethnic groups, also divided the year into four parts separated by solar points [568, p. 190]. In pre-Aryan India, the year consisted of four seasons separated by solstices and equinoxes (though at the same time the year was also divided into 2, 3, 6, 12, and 24 parts) [96, p. 56].

The following should be pointed out in connection with the problem: the division of the year into four parts by solar points was not invented by Indo-Europeans; not all the four moments were reflected in popular rites and ancient cults; it is not certain that fires lit during the respective festivals correlated with the sun; the division of the year into four parts by solstices and equinoxes was by no means universal, on the contrary, the year was more commonly divided into periods defined by other dates.

The myths and rites pertaining to pre-Indo-European tradition do not contain indications of sun worship. Yet the early farmers' religion was not indifferent to solar matters. This follows, for example, from the myth about the sun-carrying deer. It can also be seen from the fact that some major non-Indo-European festivals and rites are timed according to variations of solar phases. It is also attested by Stonehenge in England. True, Stonehenge dates from the first half of the second millennium B.C., when the Bronze Age was already in progress. However, the inhabitants of the British Isles, remote from areas of extensive Indo-Europeanization, would have preserved beliefs of the previous epoch. The structure of Stonehenge is a cromlech, a feature of the Neolithic cult. Its main axis is oriented to the point of sunrise at the summer solstice; the moment of sunset at the winter equinox is stressed; the remaining sighting directions mark other extreme positions of the sun and the moon. All this indicates that a solar calendar was in use in this part of Europe at the beginning of the Bronze Age and that this calendar was most certainly inherited from the Neolithic Age.

The count of time by years began at a certain stage in history. Some people, including Caucasian mountain dwellers, never had it until a recent period. Years were not registered, only the seasons were marked. When time began to be recorded in terms of years, one of the significant moments in the year came to be marked as a border between the end of the previous year and the beginning of the next. The Western Slavic word *hod* or *gody* means both "year" and "feast" [489a, p. 4]. The Proto-Indo-European **yeħr* ("year") has retained its initial meaning, "spring," in some languages, for example, those of the ancient Teutons and Slavs [210b, p. 83]. This suggests that the end of a

year and the beginning of the next were reckoned to be in springtime. Other peoples marked this border in summer, judging by the linguistic fact that the Russian word *leto* ("summer") means both "year" and "hot season."

In connection with this problem, Vsevolod Miller wrote: "In pagan times, major festivals accompanied the beginning of the new periods of the year for all European and Asiatic peoples. The two solstices and the two equinoxes were major astronomic points, dividing the year into natural parts" [366, p. 31]. Here Miller is carried away by the "solar cult" invented largely by students of mythology. Introducing his article on Shrovetide/Carnival with this statement, he overlooked the fact that this festival is off the vernal equinox by more than a month.

The new year could start from a certain date in solar phases or from other calendar markers. The main Druidic festivals were celebrated in February, on the first of May, in August, and on the first of November [865, p. 149]. None of these days is associated with solar phases; it is true, though, that a major Druidic festival also fell on the summer solstice. The 10th of March or the 1st of May marked the beginning of the new year for the Druids [865, p. 149]. In the Jewish tradition, the year starts with Passover or in autumn, at the end of September or the beginning of October; neither of these times is connected with solar phases. Ancient Armenians celebrated the new year in August [610, p. 32], which cannot be accounted for by yearly solar phases. Some peoples of the Ancient East and pre-Columbian America celebrated the beginning of the year with the appearance of the Pleiades constellation [568a, p. 74].

The vernal equinox when the day becomes longer than the night, could not have passed unnoticed by the ancients. The Iranian new year, Nauruz, is confined to the vernal equinox. In Macedonia, the folk calendar considered the 22nd of March as the beginning of the new year [228b, p. 254]. In Albania, a ritual was performed on the 22nd of March, during which "the serpent is driven away" so that it will not prevent the sun from gaining in strength [228b, p. 317]. In Ancient Rome the vernal equinox was indeed celebrated, but the year started from another date.

In England, until 1752, the new year opened on the 25th of March. This date is close to the vernal equinox without, however, exactly coinciding with it. Such small variations in date are quite natural, for the calendar could not have been astronomically precise in Neolithic times. Moreover, calendar dates could not have remained strictly fixed over thousands of years while repeated changes occurred in both cult traditions and calendar systems. It should, however, be noted that the substance of the 25th of March festival does not point to an association with the vernal equinox either in Classical Antiquity or in Christianity, and it does not even involve solar elements.

In Ancient Greece each polis had its own calendar system. It was common to start recording time from the first new moon after the summer or winter solstice [228a, p. 308]. In most cases, under the influence of Athens, the year began in summer [291c, p. 98]. There is evidence that the Greeks celebrated the new year on Apollo's birthday which fell in February, i.e., at the time of the present Shrovetide/Carnival.

Until the sixteenth century it was customary in Western Europe to launch the year with Easter [228b, p. 67] or Christmas [721, p. 67]. In Russia the religious year started, in accordance with the Byzantine calendar, in September, yet the popular tradition adhered to the 1st of March or 25th of December [440, p. 14]; in 1700, the new year was decreed as of the first of January.

The Ossets, ancient Angles, and other peoples saw in the new year on the winter solstice. The Tajik folk calendar counted time from the 20th—21st December, although the ~~new~~ year was celebrated on the vernal equinox, probably under the influence of the Iranian Nauruz [450, pp. 75, 76].

An 8th—7th century B.C. ceramic vessel was found in the Northern Caucasus on which a yearly calendar cycle was depicted by means of symbols; B. Rybakov's decipherment of this calendar showed that the new year opened with the winter solstice [466]. That this moment was the common beginning of the year in ancient times is evidenced by the custom of devoting the first 12 days following the solstice to fortune-telling and prediction for the next 12 months.

In Ancient Rome the birth of the new sun or the Day of the Invincible Sun (*dies solis invicti*) was celebrated on the 25th of December. The year was inaugurated, however, on another date: in order to coordinate the solar and the lunar calendars, the Romans, like the Greeks, started the year from the first new moon following the winter solstice.

Thus, different peoples did not always coordinate the beginning of the year with the solstices or equinoxes. There is nothing strange about this fact, for the solar calendar is not the only possible one. Lunar calendars were in use to this day. Fragmentary data indicate that there were also other calendars in the past, neither solar nor lunar. For instance, major pagan festivals, such as Shrovetide/Carnival, Easter, the Day of the Great Goddess (the 1st of May), the Day of the Great God (Eliás' day on the 20th of July or Quirinus' day on the 20th of August) were not connected to movements of the heavenly bodies, despite the fact that they were important calendar markers.

In various cultures particular deities were responsible for certain periods of time. The Mayas believed that the deities of the four quarters of the earth took turns ruling the world on a four-year basis [241, p. 6]. The Romans pictured the seasons of the year as genii in the form of winged human figures [558, p. 38]; the god Vortumnus supervised the alternation of the seasons [189, p. 51]. In Babylon, the sun god Shamash's "children" personified the seasons: Marduk (spring), Ninib (summer), Nabu (autumn) Nergal (winter); in addition, Kettu and Meshartu represented the two halves of the year [756, p. 30].

Names of pagan deities presumably relating to the four seasons are recorded in eastern Slavic traditions.

1. *Ivan-Kupala*. The summer festival, marking the transition from the half-year phase of the growing sun to the phase of the waning sun, was called Ivan-Kupala by eastern Slavs. Ivan is the same as John, Johannes, Janus, Ym — the two-faced god who became the ancient Roman symbol of the border between the past and the coming year and who must have personified the two halves of

the year in earlier times.¹⁷² *Kupala*, according to Russian etymological dictionaries, derives from *kupat* ("bathe") in the sense of "baptize," making Ivan-Kupala John the Baptist. However, this approach to the origin of the word is based on popular rather than scientific etymology and on comparatively recent, Christian accounts. One reason why the name Kupala should not be confused with the Russian verb *kupat* is that it is recorded in Georgian mythology in the very similar form of *ᲕᲟᲠᲗ*. We will return to this personage, not confined to the Slavic world, and to the origin of the name.

The rites of the Ivan-Kupala festival, performed on the night of the 23rd to the 24th of June, were identical in Western Europe and among eastern Slavs: jumping over bonfires, driving cattle through the fire, rolling burning wheels, and tossing flower garlands into water [687, pp. 23-26]. Christianity adopted this ineradicable pagan festival and named it the birthday of John the Baptist. The St. John midsummer festival was legitimized by the Church in the fourth century [687a, p. 21], when Christianity assimilated numerous pagan rituals.

2. *Yarila*. Two or three weeks before Ivan's Day [467, p. 73] eastern Slavs performed a rite imitating the funeral of Yarila: a dummy with an exaggerated male sex organ was loudly lamented and then drowned or burnt; next morning the rising sun was welcomed with joyous shouts [435, pp. 3-5]. Sometimes an old man was chosen for the Yarila performance, and youngsters mocked his impotence [394, p. 90]. Rituals of honoring Yarila (in other variants Yuri, George) took place at the end of April. Judging by the date of the festivities dedicated to Yarila — beginning of June, end of April — it may be assumed that this deity was associated with the beginning of the warm season. As a matter of fact, his name sounds very much like the Slavic *yar* ("spring"). Yet a different etymology of the name and a different interpretation of the image are possible, as will be shown below.

3. *Kolyada*. During Maslenitsa (Shrovetide), seven weeks before Easter, the funeral of a female dummy was simulated. In Russia Shrovetide is too early to see out the winter, but in the Near East springtime field work is already under way in February. We may therefore suppose that the rite which developed into the Shrovetide/Carnival holiday was introduced into Europe from Western Asia, and that its roots must be sought in the early farming period. If so, the female dummy seen off during the February festival was an idol of the Neolithic Goddess's winter manifestation.

Eastern Slavs have yet another mythological female image to personify winter: the Snow Maiden. She was not drowned or burnt, but melted with the arrival of spring. Besides, in contrast to the Neolithic goddess, she is a young girl. The observation that the day grows longer from the winter solstice led to the notion that the sun "is born" at that moment; the winter sun was therefore considered young. Could the Snow Maiden be the deity of the winter sun?

Christmas started to be observed in the fourth century [227, p. 39; 557, p. 76]. The date was timed to the celebration

¹⁷² See chapter "Janus and the Twins."

of the New Sun, an event marked by pagans in the Roman Empire. The sermon of one of the first Roman Popes denouncing the "pernicious opinion that this festive day is dedicated to the rise, as they put it, of a new sun, rather than to Christ's birth" is eloquent proof that Christmas is of pagan origin [514, p. 438]. A Christmas hymn retains the words "the new sun rises." Even Christian theologians admitted the solar origin of Christmas [687a, p. 20]. In 1644, a decree of the British Parliament banned Christmas celebrations as being a pagan festival; however, the decree was unable to put an end to the custom that had taken deep root.

Before the advent of Christianity, the entire Mediterranean celebrated the rebirth of the sun, returning to new life each year, on the night of the 24th to the 25th of December. In Russia they say "The sun turns towards summer" on the 25th of December, notwithstanding the winter still ahead; what was actually meant was the beginning of the stage of the annual solar cycle, which reaches its maximum in summertime.

The Serbs called the first day of this festival *božič*, a god's son — probably because the rising new sun was considered an offspring of the retired old sun. This is apparently why Teutons referred to Christmas as "Mother's Night" [489b, p. 17]. A Serbian Christmas carol tells about an old god and a young god; a Ukrainian carol has the words "Kolyada was born on the eve of Christmas." A Lithuanian song addresses the growing sun with these words: "Sweet sun, god's daughter, where have you been so long, living so far away?" [434, p. 225]. The Russians had the following Christmas rite: a maiden dressed in white and called Kolyada was driven in a sledge [434, p. 223]. It is easy to see in this Kolyada the modern personage of Russian New Year holidays known as Snow Maiden.

Some students of Russian paganism hold that Kolyada was not a proper name, but a name for the Christmas holidays [491, p. 167]. However, A. Afanasiev wrote that the winter sun was described in folk songs as a woman embarking on a long journey, and that people associated the name Kolyada with an ancient goddess [40c, p. 731]. The same author quotes information from an early manuscript about a "demon Kolyada" [40c, p. 750] who was glorified not only at Christmas, but also at Shrovetide [40a, p. 211] (this is mentioned in other sources, too [366, p. 19; 489b, p. 133]), i.e., when this deity's domination apparently ended. Kolyada appears as a living being in songs: "Kolyada, Kolyada! In came Kolyada on the eve of Christmas. We roamed, we searched for holy Kolyada" [498b, p. 68]. The poet Sergei Esenin says in a description of winter: "Kolyada came running to the village," implying the image of winter; Esenin, son of a peasant family, must have known that the notion existed among the people.

All this suggests that Slavs and other European peoples pictured winter or the winter sun as a female deity.

4. *Usen*. Ethnographic and written sources contain vague information on the deity Usen or Ovsen mentioned in Russia alongside Kolyada during the Christmas holidays [434, p. 21; 489a, p. 177]. In 1628, the Tsar Mikhail and the Patriarch Philaret issued a decree forbidding orthodox believers "to hail Kolyada or Ovsen"; twenty years later the Tsar Alexei had to issue an identical decree [491, pp. 51, 52].

Usen is a proper name, as can be seen from Christmas carols: "Oh Ovsen, oh Ovsen! You go and make merry on holy nights, through bright halls"; "We welcome Ovsen, our long-awaited guest" [541, pp. 243, 244]; "Who will, who will ride over that little bridge? Ovsen and the New Year will ride there" [318, p. 61].

In Russia and in Western Europe a female dummy used to be burnt during the Christmas holidays; this rite was accompanied by a song which reveals that the dummy represented a "sick" goddess [542, p. 14; 228a, p. 30]. In Germany on Christmas Eve an old woman made of straw was carried around, thrown into water at midnight and replaced by a maiden dressed in white, a golden crown on her head, who was carried through the village with song [228a, p. 156]. These rites apparently meant that the deity of winter was replacing that of autumn. It seems that both autumn and winter were believed to be under the patronage of a mythical female being.

When did autumn assume its rights? It is appropriate to remember that according to Christian legend, the Virgin was born in September, and that this month ("Indian summer") is referred to as "woman's summer" in Russia. The Jewish holiday of Simhat Torah which is celebrated in early autumn features rituals unusual for present-day Judaic religious observance, such as dancing and carrying little flags; but dancing and flags are typical attributes of the cult of the Neolithic Great Goddess.¹⁷³

In India a festival in honor of a goddess was held twice a year: a minor one in March and a major one in September [489c, p. 3]. These rites apparently marked the beginning and the end of the year's "female" half. Why do myths refer to one half of the year as male and the other as female? This may be related to the "right—left" dichotomy going back to the Neolithic, and associated with the notion "male—female." In ancient times many peoples regarded even numbers (and the right-hand side) as "masculine" and odd numbers (and the left-hand side) as "feminine" [198, pp. 259-269]. To this day, men button their coats and jackets on the right, and women on the left.

The collapse of Neolithic cultures and the emergence of new ones led to a change in beliefs. A male god occupied the dominant position in religious conceptions, replacing the goddess. Confrontation with followers of the goddess' cult inevitably evoked a negative attitude towards her, which fell on psychologically rich soil, for even before she had been considered a source of misfortune. This is probably a clue to the negative attitude to the "female" principle and to the notion "left."

One may conclude that deities of the four seasons of the year existed in Slavic paganism: Yarila, Kupala, Usen, Kolyada. Let us again analyze annual pagan festivals, this time from the point of view of the Neolithic early farming elements they contain.

A. Afanasiev and A. Famintsyn believed Kupala was the deity of summer, a personification of the summer sun. However, judging by the Ivan-Kupala rituals, this

¹⁷³ The flagstaff holds an apple, an attribute of the goddess' consort. The combination of flag and apple symbolizes the union of the two divinities, the union which sponsors fertility and life. Another Jewish custom with the same meaning is that of eating an apple with honey at the New Year's feast.

deity personified neither summer nor the sun. A Russian chronicle characterizes Kupala as "the god of abundance, similar to Greek Ceres, and thanks are offered to him when the time comes to gather crops" [40c, p. 713].

In Ancient Rome the summer solstice festival was a time of merry-making. It was associated with Servius Tullius, a legendary early Roman king allegedly fathered by divine fire. Sailing boats decorated with flowers was a characteristic feature of this Roman holiday [558, p. 178]. But merry-making and drinking sprees, fire, river, boat, and flowers are all attributes of the cult of the early farmers' earth god. Very much like Kupala in sound is the name Cupid, belonging to the Roman god of sensual love, who is pictured with a bow and arrow, pointing to this image's origin in the Neolithic earth god. There is a mysterious personage called Kopalā in Georgian mythology [143, p. 194]; he is mentioned in a song: "Glory to Kopalā, mighty as the sun and high as the sky" [482, p. 92]. Nothing definite is known about Kopalā, yet associated with him are notions of salvation and recovery from ill health [371a, p. 666]. Corresponding motifs are characteristic of the so-called "culture hero" and of the divine twins, images connected with concepts of the early farming period.

The Kupala is also similar to that of the Great Goddess Kybele (Cybele) of Asia Minor. Similar names for male and female deities are not infrequent in the range of images devised in early farmers' mythology. Also note that the names Kupala and Kybele resemble the Latin *caballus* ('horse'), Turkic *kevāl* ('horse'), Russian *kobyła* ('mare'), Latin *capus* ('bird of prey'; birds of prey represented the underworld god or the Great Goddess), and Ukrainian *koval* ('smith'; the underworld god was considered a smith).

V. Ivanov and V. Toporov trace the name Kupala to the Indo-European root *kup* which forms a series of words meaning 'to rage, to desire' in various languages [200, p. 147]. This meaning, however, is secondary: the Nostratic **kūpā*, which means simply 'to boil,' is older [210a, p. 366]. Also probable is the association of the name Kupala with the Nostratic **kūpā* ('mountain, hill') [210a, p. 366], for it follows from the above, there are grounds to assume that the prototype of Kupala could have been associated with the pre-Indo-European earth god, one of whose attributes was the mountain.

The pre-Indo-European origin of the Ivan-Kupala festival is also suggested by its accompanying rites of lighting bonfires, twining wreaths, offering sacrifices to the river or the sea, and material accessories like the color red and the branches of a nut tree. It is also evidenced by popular beliefs that treasure can be found on Midsummer Night (the serpent, who is the Neolithic underworld god, was considered the guardian of hidden treasure).

Despite the fact that the Ivan-Kupala feast is associated with the solstice, its rites do not reveal any signs of sun worship. Fire and water were involved in the ceremonies. In Albania the festival is known as "the day of fire." All over Europe, from Spain to Russia and the Eastern Mediterranean, there was a custom of walking barefoot on hot coals on Midsummer Night. This has to do with the cult of the underworld god, rather than with the cult of the sun.

It must be admitted that the above hypothesis that the festival timed to the summer solstice was dedicated to the deity responsible for the summer phase of the year, is largely speculative. The rites have nothing solar about them, and the true mythological foundation of this archaic festival remains unclear.

No clearer is the relationship between the sun and the image of Yarila/Yuri, the deity believed by students of mythology to personify spring. The name Yarila may be etymologically derived from the Nostratic **jarā* ('shine' [210a, p. 280]), or the proto-Slavic **orāl* ('eagle') [542c, p. 151]. In the latter word, *-āl* is the suffix, and the root may be traced to the Nostratic **horā* ('rise, ascend'); it may be connected with the ancient Egyptian *hrt* ('sky').¹⁷⁴ It follows from certain myths known in Classical Antiquity that the eagle used to represent the sun; however, there is ground to assume that the celestial body was pictured as a fire bird or the heavenly manifestation of the underworld god. It is noteworthy in this connection that Hittite texts record a river called Haraš-hapaš (Eagle River), which has European parallels [108, p. 539] (rivers were associated with the underworld god in the Neolithic religion). There was a place on the outskirts of Novgorod named Yarila, and picnics were held on Yarila Day on a mountain there. Yarila was honored on Thursday, the day of the week dedicated to the earth god.

Had Yarila really represented spring in the system of beliefs involving sun worship, the corresponding rites would have been timed at the beginning and the end of this quarter of the year, the period from vernal equinox to summer solstice. However, the farewell to Yarila took place at the beginning of June. Could this have been due to the fact that the solstice fell on the 9th of June instead of the 22nd, in keeping with the now obsolete Julian calendar [228c, p. 123]? If the farewell did once coincide with the Ivan-Kupala festival (which is not indicated by the rites of this festival), Yarila would appear as a deity of the quarter of the year marked by the vernal equinox and summer solstice. This is not certain. The major festival of Yarila or George took place on the 22–27th of April, whereas no rites or legends about his birth are associated with the solar date of the 22nd of March.

It is, generally speaking, rather strange that there is such a lack of coordination in festivals and rites which might have been associated with the idea of welcoming spring. "Soviet ethnographers proceed from studying the work practice of the peasant, the natural experience of the people" in interpreting folk calendar customs and rites [228b, p. 7]. However, scholars must proceed from facts, not preconceptions. The only rite among numerous and diverse Russian spring rites which really looks like the welcoming of spring is the custom of "spring calling": on certain March days there were songs on the subject, and it

¹⁷⁴ Also belonging in this category may be the Latin *ursus* ('bear'), ancient Egyptian *rt* ('snake'), and Germanic *horse*. The Ingushian *ārzi* ('eagle') shows that the origin of the words of this group goes beyond the framework of not only Indo-European, but also Nostratic languages. V. Ivanov suggests that appellations for the eagle such as the Hittite *haraš*, Gothic *ara*, and Russian *oryol* can be traced to the Proto-Indo-European **h₂ue* which designated the "upper world" and derived from a root whose initial meaning was 'to blow' [108, pp. 489, 537].

follows from the content of these songs that spring comes not because of the increase of solar heat, but is brought in by birds [25, pp. 89, 103]. As a rule, the spring festivals and rites of Slavs and other European peoples do not conform either to seasonal changes in weather or to agricultural activities. As a matter of fact, what has the uninhibited February Shrovetide festival, called Maslenitsa in Russia and Carnival in West Europe, to do with the "work practice of the peasant" or with the "natural experience of the people"? The same applies to Easter, whose date varies within a wide range. Whence the popular opinion that spring starts on the 2nd of February?

Authors seeking to find a solar or agricultural explanation for spring rites seem to ignore Lent (Great Fast) between the joyous holidays of Shrovetide/Carnival and Easter, which cannot be accounted for rationally and which, by the way, covers the vernal equinox, a day when it might be supposed one would celebrate the victory of spring over winter. Occasionally one comes across attempts to explain this fact. For example, V. Sokolova, an expert in the field of spring and summer calendar rites, explains the strange welcoming of spring in the cold Russian February by the fact that the Christian Lent came at the beginning of spring, when, due to the fast, all entertainment and games were forbidden [492, p. 11]. B. Rybakov also believes that Shrovetide once coincided with the vernal equinox, but was moved to February because of the Christian Great Fast [475, p. 314]. However, the February festival corresponding to the Russian Maslenitsa, and the April festival corresponding to Easter, with the 40-day fast between, existed long before the rise of Christianity.

The meaning of Maslenitsa, Shrovetide or Carnival is truly an enigma. The explanation in terms of the "solar theory" cannot be accepted: the festival could not have originated in February as a celebration in honor of the sun. Moreover, the festival proper is devoid of solar implications. Neither are "agricultural-calendar" substantiations justified: the festival of "spring awakening" is for some reason held in winter, and when spring comes people fast and sing mournful songs. The point is that this festival has no roots in the living or economic conditions of the European populations: it is a ritual which took shape under the conditions of early farming cultures and was passed on to other peoples as a religious tradition. In the Near East, spring does arrive in February.¹⁷⁵ The popular traditions of various European peoples set the 2nd of February as the beginning of spring even in countries where winter is still in full swing. This tradition could have arisen somewhere near the southern coast of Asia Minor or in Mesopotamia. Notwithstanding all this, the authors of the book *Calendar Customs and Rites* [228b] attempt to find a rational substantiation for this date as the beginning of spring as far away as Scandinavia.

This ancient early farming calendar marker was also assimilated by Christianity; Christians call it Candlemas. The corresponding word means 'encounter' in Old Russian. According to a Church legend, St. Simeon encountered the Virgin Mary on that day, bringing her baby to the temple,

¹⁷⁵ The Jewish festival "the New Year of the Trees" is observed at the beginning of February.

as was the Hebrews' custom. According to Russian tradition, "winter and summer meet" on that day. In a number of cases, the 5th of February was considered the day when the winter domination of the Great Goddess ended and the period of the Great God began. In Ancient Greece, on the island of Andros, there was a spring at the temple of Dionysus whose water was believed to turn into wine each year on the 5th of February; spring, wine, and Dionysus are all survivals of notions associated with the archaic earth god.

Shrovetide/Carnival is, in origin, a southern early farmers' celebration of the earth god's awakening. Carnival games therefore involve the motif of a pretended death followed by a resurrection. All the rites and attributes of the Carnival are connected with cult-mythological conceptions of the deity. Farinaceous foods are a ritual attribute — because cereals are the gift of the earth god. Drinking bouts are arranged — because wine is a gift of the earth god. The bull is driven around — as it was an incarnation of the earth god. A boat is carried in a ceremonial procession — because the earth god was also the god of the sea-ocean. Horse races are run — for the horse belonged in the realm of the god of the underworld kingdom. People wear masks, smear their faces with soot, and sing carols as on Christmas — because Carnival and Christmas are rites marking the beginning and the end of the winter period in the annual cycle of the earth god. People light fires and jump over bonfires as on Ivan-Kupala Day, because fire was an attribute of the underworld god. The Carnival features suggestive games and dancing, honoring newlyweds and jokingly punishing bachelors, because the god, awakening, makes love to his spouse. Symbolic fights (in Europe) or real fist-fights (in Russia) are among the elements of Maslenitsa, Shrovetide or Carnival festivities¹⁷⁶; this custom seems semantically connected with the myth about the struggle between two gods representing the underworld.

On February 15–17 the Romans celebrated a festival which acquired the significance of purification, redemption. Its origin can be judged by the fact that it was dedicated to Quirinus (a patron of farming, who personified a function of the earth god), or to Februus (the underworld god assimilated from the Etruscans), or to Faunus (the god of woods and pastures, patron of shepherds and hunters, imagined as half-man, half-goat; the Neolithic earth god was the prototype of this mythical personage). The Russian Orthodox church set the 11th of February as the day of St. Vlas; apparently, pagans celebrated Veles Day at about that time of the year.

Prayers are said for the dead at the end of Maslenitsa, Shrovetide or Carnival (the dead being held by the earth god to whom the festival is dedicated). Scrambled eggs are indispensable during that period (for the egg is an attribute of the serpent, the underworld god). People go to the cemetery, pancakes and vodka are placed on the graves of relatives [310, p. 82] (for bread and wine are gifts of the earth god). Adherents of the rationalistic interpretation of popular rites should think twice before

¹⁷⁶ In England, pitched battles were staged during Shrovetide, under the supervision of the mayor and church authorities, and tug-of-war contests were held.

seeking relevance between praying for the dead, on the one hand, and springtime agricultural work or festivities marking the end of winter, on the other.

Survivals of the early farming festivity in which the Western European Carnival and the Russian-British Maslenitsa or Shrovetide originated, can be seen in the Jewish Purim holidays which usually fall at the beginning of March, in accordance with the flexible Jewish calendar. The story of Purim centers around a struggle between two personages, positive Mordecai and negative Haman. These two names resemble some of those associated with the underworld (Marduk and Ammon).¹⁷⁷ Their close relationship may be alluded to in the traditional phrase that during Purim one must drink till one cannot distinguish Mordecai from Haman. The following are some of the features of the Purim festival, suggesting its relevance to Maslenitsa or Carnival: merry-making, drinking, fantastic costumes, shouting and general noise. There is a difference, however. Maslenitsa/Carnival comes before the fast, whereas Purim is celebrated after the fast, which suggests that it is dedicated to the resurrection of the deity killed by Haman (in the Judaic version, the prospective victim survives).

Popular Christmas rites also have characteristics which indicate an origin not in sun worship alone. Christmas night is called *korachun* by some Eastern European peoples (Slavs, Rumanians, Hungarians); it will be shown below that this word is etymologically connected with one of the names of the underworld god. In Ancient Rome a festival held a week before the winter solstice was dedicated to Saturn, the pre-Indo-European underworld god.¹⁷⁸ The winter solstice festival of Caucasian mountain dwellers was celebrated by men alone, without the participation of women [12, p. 353]. Bulgarians referred to the time between Christmas and Twelfth-day as "wolf holidays" [40a, p. 745], the wolf being one of the incarnations of the Neolithic underworld god. A popular belief in Russia held that demons enjoyed themselves troubling people on those days [310, p. 34]. It is certain that Christmas maskers represented demons. I. Snigirev, one of the first students of Russian paganism, wrote: "The maskers deliberately represent incarnate devils" [489c, p. 32]. They wore sheepskin coats inside out, since the underworld god was pictured not only as a snake, but also as a beast, smeared their faces with soot, because he was a "black god", put on goat and bear masks, and carried dummies of the wolf and the snake [40a, p. 765]. There is evidence that the sheepskin coat turned inside out was associated with the underworld god. For example, in the Russian wedding ritual, the inside-out sheepskin was put on "in order for the bridegroom to become rich," and a man thus dressed was called a "bear" [540, p. 121]. It was believed that hidden treasure could be found on Christmas Night, as well as on Midsummer Night [721, p. 65]. Pork, flesh of the animal associated with the cult of the Neolithic earth god, is indispensable to all peoples who celebrate Christmas. The fast before the Christmas holidays can be comprehended if it is considered as an expression of sorrow over the revered god falling asleep

¹⁷⁷ Mordecai and Esther are names of non-Hebrew origin.

¹⁷⁸ See chapter "The Black God."

for the winter period.

One might think that the flames burning on the Christmas tree were originally meant to influence the newborn sun, to make it shine brightly all the year round. It has repeatedly been shown, however, that fire did not symbolize the sun in pagan rites; judging by numerous data, it was an attribute of the pre-Indo-European underworld god. The Christmas tree proper has nothing to do with the solar cult: in pre-Indo-European beliefs it represented the World Tree — an incarnation of the Neolithic Great Goddess.

The Jewish festival of Hanukkah, in December, has elements borrowed from a pagan December festival. These are: a belief that miracles once happened on those days; lighting fires; presenting gifts; fortune-telling; burning a straw man; ritual consuming of pastry. The Hanukkah and Purim holidays have elements of rites much older than the Jews. These holidays therefore differ somewhat from others in Judaism: games are more prominent in them than prayers. Despite the fact that these holidays are taken to commemorate major events in Jewish history, one cannot but feel that although Orthodox Judaism legitimized them, it did so not without reservations.

Clay tablets with ancient cuneiform texts discovered during archeological excavations in Asia Minor tell about a festival held in pre-Hittite times. It started on the 25th of December. According to a myth described there, the fertility god Talipinu brought a sack of gifts from his father, the earth god, and hung it on a sacred evergreen tree [748, p. 373]. One can see that the contemporary Yule tree and Santa Claus with a sack of gifts derive from this type of myth and the respective rites. The name Santa Claus is the distorted Dutch Sinter Klaas (St. Nicholas, who, as will be shown elsewhere in this book, originated from the archaic earth god). Santa Claus is dressed in red, enters homes through chimneys, and distributes gifts; these features are typical of the former earth god. The custom of house-to-house Christmas carols seems to be another branch of the ancient story. Christmas carollers may be messengers of the sleeping god. They do not bring gifts, but extend hopes for abundant crops, wealth, and prosperity.

Thus, two complexes of different rites were combined in the pagan winter solstice festival — worshipping the earth god and honoring the sun.

The Russian feast of Epiphany, coming twelve days after Christmas, is obviously inherited from the early farming period: the Christian sanctification of water with a cross have originated in the Neolithic idea of the union between the goddess, the mistress of heavenly waters, and the underworld god symbolized by the cross. Followers of the rationalistic agrarian interpretation of annual folk festivals explain such baptismal rites as a manifestation of the "cult of water" and of "concern about a future harvest" [396, p. 53]. But why was the coldest period of the year chosen for the sanctification of water and for sanctification by water, including submersion in a river? Why should concern for the future harvest have given rise to rites at the beginning of winter, long before the springtime sowing? After all, any element of pagan ritual can be treated positivistically: the Christmas custom of wearing fantastic costumes is a "popular laughter cult," male and female drag can be a

"popular symbolism of earthly fertility," house-to-house Christmas carolling is no more than "wishes of wellbeing," mythicized wedding performances are "preparation of the young people for marriage" (though it was common in Russia to arrange weddings in autumn, nine or ten months after Christmas), baptizing is the "popular water cult" (why in winter?), Christmas games "symbolize the joyous rebirth of life" (in January, when nature comes to a standstill), etc. [396, pp. 45-53].

The pages of the cited book which propounds the attitude adopted in Soviet scholarship to pagan atavisms, are full of expressions like "spontaneous peasant labor experience," "utilitarian practical experience of the people," etc. At the same time, however, one reads that "the peasant calendar, produced by the low level of development of productive forces, set traditional, often irrational terms for agricultural work" [396, p. 43]. What level of development of productive forces is required to enable the setting of rational terms for agricultural work? Are not simple observations over four thousand years (the period of the stable existence of agriculture on the territory of Russia) sufficient for this? The "popular calendar" is full of superstitions. For example, Russians were afraid to work on the 27th of July, lest lightning burn their crops. "Folk omens" make much the same sense. Russians thought that bad weather on the 1st of May betokened cold during the next winter. From the point of view of common sense, what is the connection between bad weather on the first of May and the forthcoming winter? The connection is mythological: winter and the first of May are the periods when the Great Goddess most manifests herself. For the same reason, the first of May was considered unlucky in the British Isles [664, p. 150]. As noted by one scholar, some pagan tribes had more holidays than regular work days [7, p. 14]. It was much more important to pray than to work. Not sober-mindedness and not positive experience, but irrationality and lack of independent thinking determined and still determine most people's outlooks.

Christmas and Maslenitsa/Carnival rites share common features not only in Russia and Western Europe, but also in Ossetia, for instance [582, p. 102]. This is because the festivals were dedicated to the same deity. Plutarch wrote that in the religion of the Phrygians, the god sleeps through winter and wakes up with warmer weather, and that the Phrygians celebrated his retiring and awakening. Taking into account the duration of winter in Asia Minor, one can see that these holidays fell in December and February, i.e., they coincided with present Christmas and Maslenitsa/Carnival.¹⁷⁹

The mythicized calendar system of various peoples divides the year into two halves, the cold half being "feminine" and the warm "masculine." The reason for such an attribution of the two halves of the year is obscure. As far as one can reconstruct calendar dates of the Neolithic Great Goddess in terms of the fragments of ancient beliefs and rites which have reached us, she was not associated only with the cold part of the year. Still, winter in the Neolithic

¹⁷⁹ In Eastern Europe it was too early for the bear to awaken on the 2nd of February, so inhabitants of the region postponed the ritual till the 24th of March, the day of vernal equinox and the eve of the Christian Annunciation.

religion was believed to be the period of the goddess' undivided rule; the earth god was asleep during that time. The contemporary rolling of snow balls to make snow men (snow women in Russia) is obviously inherited from the times when idols were molded from snow to represent the goddess in her winter image. The "snow woman" is provided with a broom which once served as a symbol of the tree, an incarnation of the goddess. The Russian expression "Mother Winter" derives from the conception that winter is associated with the goddess, the mother of the world; otherwise one cannot understand why the season when nature is frozen over and barren should be referred to as "mother."

That the period of her domination ended in February is evidenced not only by the rite of burying the female dummy during this month's festivals. In Poland the 2nd of February was dedicated to the "thundergod's mother". The Czechs celebrated St. Gatah's day on the 5th of February; spinning was forbidden on that day, lest snakes invade your house [228, p. 221]. The ban on spinning was associated with the Great Goddess, the wife of the serpent and the mother of snakes; the very name Gatah seems to be etymologically associated with *gad* ('serpent').

In France, the 5th of February is St. Agatha's Day. It was recommended not to engage in spinning on that day; the day was marked by scenes of exorcising "the old woman" who symbolized the cold season of the year [228b, pp. 31, 32]. Incidentally, in China the 5th of February is the festival of welcoming spring [25, p. 82]. Another coincidence? Or do similar environments lead to similar ways of thinking?

Despite being buried or expelled with the termination of the cold season, the goddess continued to live and to rule. May, the month of transition from spring to summer, was dedicated to her. Major festivals of her cult were held during that month: the 1st of May, Whitsunday, Rosalia. Knowing the temper of the mistress of the world, the Greeks thought the month of May unfavorable for any undertakings; during that month it was not recommended to marry, embark on journeys, plant anything, or cut cloth for garments [228b, p. 334] (not to plant anything in May for garments [228b, p. 334] — sounds very much like "work practice of the farmer," — doesn't it? And to avoid marrying in May is exactly "natural experience of the people"). The Russians, too, have a corresponding "folk omen," don't marry in May, or "suffer all your life" (some sounds in the Russian verb *mayat'sya*, 'suffer,' coincide with the name of the month). The Jewish month of Iyar, approximately corresponding to May, is also considered unlucky; weddings were avoided for 33 days following Passover.

On the 1st of May rites were performed throughout Europe in honor of the Great Goddess. An important element was erecting a pole decorated with green branches and colored pieces of cloth. In Bulgaria this festival was held in honor of snakes; in Rumania, women did not work on that day, lest stormy weather ruin the crops [228b, pp. 290, 311]. Rain on the 1st of May was believed to have healing properties, for if the goddess, mistress of rain, sent rain on her day, it could only indicate her benevolence. It was believed everywhere in Europe that witches held their sabbats on the eve of the 1st of May; to hinder them it

was recommended to burn brooms. The May day holiday was given so much significance that ancient Teutons started the new year from it. Rudiments of May day ritual practices connected with the cult of the Great Goddess were partly assimilated by Christianity; Spain Catholics, for example, had a May rite including a special ceremonial dance before the Virgin's altar, the dancers wearing white clothes.

At the end of March and beginning of April, when the first shoots appear from the soil, the resurrection of the deity of vegetation was celebrated. The parents of the deity who was returning to life, the earth god and the heaven goddess, rejoiced. That is why in Russia Easter holidays involved attributes representing the earth god (eggs and a phallus-shaped cake) and the heaven goddess (a wheel atop a pole). The wheel is set on fire, which symbolizes the union of the earth god and the heaven goddess. Note that wheels were burned during Easter, rather than on the vernal equinox; therefore, this ritual has nothing to do with solar symbolism. The popular belief that the sun dances during Easter can also be traced to pre-Indo-European beliefs.

The summer solstice festival was dedicated, as the rites show, not only to the underworld god, but also the heaven goddess. In Russia a certain Kupalnitsa was mentioned alongside Kupala. Her name was Maria, judging by the expression "Ivan and Maria."

In July or August, the hottest time of the year in the Near East where the early farmers' cultures emerged, a festival was once held especially dedicated to the Great God. In Christianity this is St. Elias's day, the 20th of July. In Russia it was marked by festivities which had nothing to do with Christianity; a bull (in ancient times a man) was sacrificed to the deity. St. Elias's day falls approximately on the hypothetical day of the pagan Great God. As already mentioned, Russian peasants avoided working on the 27th of July, fearing that lightning would burn their crops. Both dates seem to go back to the same period, for St. Elias is the former thundergod. In Judaism, the ninth day of the month of Ab (at the end of July or beginning of August), is a day of mourning to which tradition ascribes major tragic events in Jewish history. Observant Jews abstain from eating meat during the first nine days of Ab. The ancient Hebrews celebrated an unaccountable festivity on the 15th of Ab, when men carried torches and lit bonfires, while women dressed in white and danced in rings in vineyards.

In autumn, the goddess apparently resumed her dominion. This is evidenced, in particular, by the series of Christian festivals dedicated to female saints during this period: the day of the Virgin Mary on the 8th of September, Theodora's day on the 11th of September, and the feast of the Protection of the Virgin on the first of October. As pointed out above, the Jewish holiday of Simhat Torah at the end of September or beginning of October contains elements of veneration of the Neolithic Great Goddess, such as dancing and carrying flags.

It was proposed earlier in this chapter that Kolyada and Usen in Eastern European folklore represented female deities of winter and autumn. However, the names go back to an earlier period and to other mythological images. Kolyada was mentioned in Christian

Kolyada was mentioned in Christmas carols and during

Shrovetide, i.e., festivals which can be traced back to early farming rites dedicated to the earth god falling asleep for the winter and awakening when the time comes. Kolyada may be a winter manifestation of the Great Goddess. The most common interpretation of the word *kolyada* is that it was borrowed from the Latin *calendae* (the first day of the month). This etymology, however, is hardly likely. At all events, the probability of Russian folklore borrowing a specific Latin term is doubtful. The data given above indicate that Kolyada was a mythical personage with features of the Great Goddess of the early farming period and had no connection with the Greco-Roman *calendae*. The name Kolyada may come from the Great Goddess Kali. Etymologically associated with the name Kolyada is the Russian *koldun* ('sorcerer'), apparently the priest of Kolyada/Kali.

In the literature, the name of the Russian mythological personage Usen or Ovsen is compared to the names of the Vedic rising sun goddess Uṣas and the Latvian-Lithuanian male deity Usenis/Ušin, honored in spring. Scholars, however, were perplexed by the fact that Vedic Uṣas and Lithuanian Ušin are of dissimilar sex and that Russian Usen figures at Christmas, while Lithuanian Ušin is associated with spring. Vladimir Dahl in his *Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language* accounts for the latter circumstance by the fact that in Russia the New Year celebration was moved from spring to the beginning of winter. This change, however, took place in 1700, while information about the Usen of Christmas carols refers to earlier times.

Vedic Ušas and Latvian-Lithuanian Usenis/Ušin are dissimilar deities. The etymological affinity of the names is due to the common origin of these mythological personages: Usenis' genealogy leads to the image of the Neolithic earth god, while Ušas originates from the image of his daughter, the Neolithic sun goddess. That Usenis/Ušin must be related to the underworld god is indicated, in particular, by the circumstance that songs associate him with fire and that "he had two sons, both of the same age", i.e., he is the father of the Twins. The honoring of Usenis/Ušin in April shows that he corresponds to the eastern Slavic Yarila, whose genealogy, as shown above, leads to the image of the same god. Rites in honor of the Russian Usen took place in the second half of December. This suggests that the name preserved in Russian folklore is relevant to the Neolithic underworld god, celebrations on whose behalf should be regarded as marking his passing to the stage of hibernation.

Consequently, Baltic Usenis/Ušin and eastern Slavic Usen are, in origin, the same deity whose rites took place in the Neolithic cult both during the period of winter solstice and in spring. Since the pre-Indo-European festival dedicated to seeing off this deity was held during the transition from fall to winter, the personage named Usen could, subsequently, when his former significance was forgotten, have been perceived as a personification of the retiring autumn. Hence, probably, the appellations for autumn in Slavic and Baltic languages. The Russian *osen* ('autumn') is similar to *Ovsen* (a variant of the name Usen), and the Lithuanian *assanis* ('autumn') to the Latvian *Usenis*. The Nostratic **asa* ('fire'), which was probably one of the

names of the underworld god, could be the source of these names. This is confirmed by a number of mythological names and specific terms from other languages.

Medieval written sources of the western Slavs mention, among other gods, Iassa, whose name is compared by B. Rybakov to the Old Polish *jazê* (*waż*) and the Russian *yažer* ('dragon') [475, pp. 397, 404]. In the Judaic tradition, Azazel is the angel who rebelled against God; Azhi, Aži is the three-headed serpent in the Avesta, who once ruled the world and was then chained to a cliff. Jesse is the legendary forefather of King David and the mythical ancestor of Jesus.¹⁸⁰ The name Jesse is related to *issi* ('light') [730b, p. 876]. In an Ossetian epic, Aza is the name of a tree growing in the country of the dead. Sumerian Nin-Azu (the Great Azu) is a god of the underworld also known as (the Great) Asa, Aša (the Arabic 'lord-physician.'). The Jewish name Asa, Aša (the Arabic Yassir) means 'healer.' It was suggested in the chapter "The Bull-Moon" that appellations for the bull such as *os* in Northern Caucasian languages, the ethnonym *osi* of the Ossets, and the Kabardinian cultic interjection *assa* should be regarded as stemming from the name of the earth god who assumed various appearances, in particular, the bull. The goat is another image of the earth god, therefore the deity to which ancient Hebrews sacrificed goats was referred to as Aza(z)el. This is undoubtedly the name of the underworld god, because the cliff in the wilderness to which the scapegoat had to go, bore this name; the cliff represented hell. In modern Hebrew the expression "lekh le-Azazel" means "go to hell."

Since the goat was an animal representing the god of the earth and underworld, the spirit of death in Arabian legends was called Azrael. Asz is the heaven deity of pagan Lithuanians [730a, p. 147] (the heaven god was

THE OBLIQUE CROSS

Oblique cross diagrams are plentiful in Daghestan. The simplest type is formed of two intersecting oblique bars (Fig. 210). On the face of it, it is no more than a decorative pattern. However, it derives from a symbol that was once quite meaningful.

Let us see how the sign is done on the wall stone of a house (Fig. 210: 1). Had it been no more than decorative, an ornamental element made up of two diagonals to fill the space of a rectangle, the maker would naturally have covered the entire surface of the stone with the pattern. But the design occupies only a part of the surface. This part is smoothed, while the rest of the stone remains rough. It is not accidental that the design is placed on the cornerstone of the building, close to the very corner. This sign was apparently regarded as a charm to ensure the durability of the dwelling and good fortune for those living in it. It must have had the same meaning for the Hittites when it was placed over gates (Fig. 211: 3).

(Fig. 213) is a variant of this symbol. Another variant is an oblique cross with angular insertions in the form of chevrons in all four sectors (Fig. 212).

originally a heavenly manifestation of the earth god¹⁸¹). Es, Eš is the name of the god among Siberian ethnic minorities, the Ostyaks and Kets, populating areas near the River Yenisei. In the Phoenician language *es* is 'goat'. These words can be compared to the Near Eastern *is*, *iš* ('male') and Nostratic **asa* ('fire'). In all probability, Israel (Jacob), who wrestled with God and was punished with lameness, is the same as Azazel or, in a different variant, Azrael, which may be interpreted as Assur-el, i.e., dragon-god. As a matter of fact, the root-word **asa* with the formants *r*, *s*, *t*, *p*, *n* produces a number of other etymologically related names and terms: *Assur*, *yašcer*, *Ušas*, the ancient Syrian *hesse* (deriving from this word is the name of the Essenes), the ancient Iranian *yazata* for 'deity', the Abkhazian *aŋcva* for 'god', the Basque *asto* for 'ass, donkey', the Scythian *aspa* for 'horse' and *aspaina* for 'iron', the ancient Greek Jasiph or Jason, lover of Demeter, and Slavic Yasen, wedded to Marena [541, pp. 172, 288] (the last name leads to the image of the Great Goddess); and finally Usenis, Ušin, Usen.

In conclusion, it is to be inferred that relatively few elements of the major annual festivals and rites of the European peoples can be considered specifically Indo-European in origin. These festivals and rites developed mainly from cult practices of the pre-Indo-European population of Europe; they survived over millennia, despite the collapse of the early farming cultures and the disappearance of the bearers of those cultures.

¹⁸⁰ And the name of Jesus himself? Does it really stem from the Hebrew name Yehoshua? The Jews call him Yeshu. It is apparently not by chance that Russian theologians maintained that he should be called (in Russian) Isus, not Iisus.

¹⁸¹ See chapter "The White God."

The oblique cross is a widespread ornamental motif. It occurs in different periods ranging from the Paleolithic to the nineteenth century and is used in different parts of the world (Fig. 211). It was adopted as St. Andrew's cross by Christian symbolism.¹⁸²

A. Miller expressed the opinion that the oblique cross is a "simple solution to a problem of ornamental nature" [358, p. 36]. However, the judgement that certain ancient crosses originated in pure fantasy is unsound.

Various oblique cross designs emerged in the Paleolithic. An example of a Paleolithic ornament in the form of a chain of oblique crosses was given above (see chapter "The Sun Bird"). This motif may designate the fence of a hunting enclose and in such a case would refer to hunting magic. The Paleolithic ornament shown in Figure 21:1 must mean something else. The cross there consists of four oblique strokes instead of two intersecting lines; it therefore could not designate two stakes driven into

¹⁸² According to Christian legend, the Apostle Andrew was crucified on such a cross.



Fig. 210. Oblique cross symbol and decorative motif, Daghestan: 1 — cornerstone of a house in Natsi; 2 — carved stone in a tomb wall, Kalakoreish; 3 — carved stone slab blocking a window aperture, Varsil.

the ground at an angle. Concerning a similar ornament on Neolithic materials from Asia Minor (Fig. 211: 2) J. Mellaart suggests that it represents a plait [762, p. 37]. It is odd, however, that a grapheme signifying no more than a wickerwork pattern should endure thousands of years; moreover, in the first of the examples analyzed, it decorates a bone object (such Paleolithic artifacts are obviously cult objects).

The ethnographer S. Ivanov, who studied Siberian ornaments, believed that the oblique cross within a square came into being from a combination of triangles [203, p. 449]. This guess seems to be correct, but it is not supported by argumentation. As was shown above, this combination was not a purely compositional device. It had a specific meaning: the symbol in the form of four triangles arranged crosswise expressed the notion of the "four regions of the earth" (Fig. 160: 5).

The oblique cross with chevrons in all four sectors (Fig. 212) is apparently also a symbol of the four regions, though pertaining to the celestial rather than terrestrial part of the

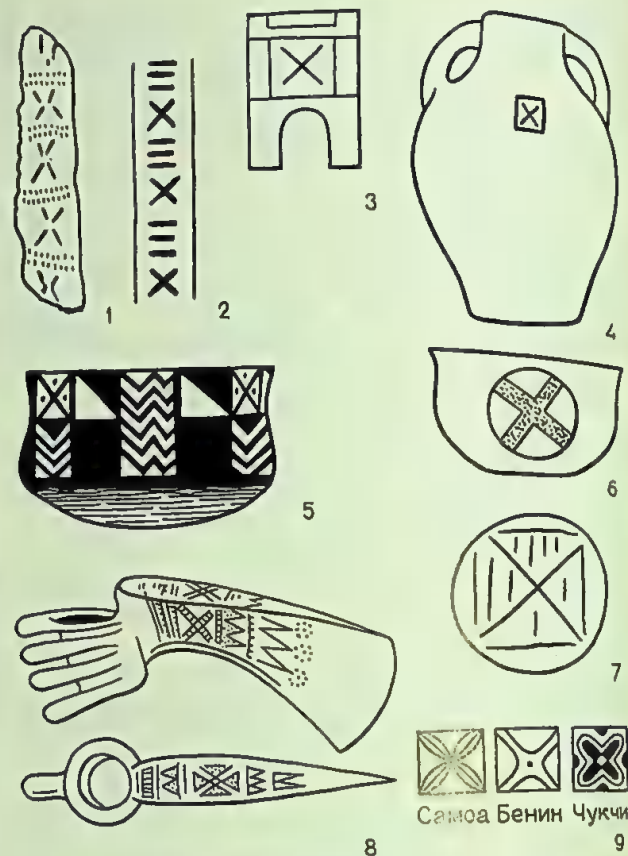


Fig. 211. Sign of oblique cross in various epochs: 1 — Western Europe, Paleolithic [703, pl. 93]; 2 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, p. 37]; 3 — Hittite [785, p. 387]; 4 — Crete, Neolithic [676a, p. 167]; 5, 6 — Asia Minor, 6000–5000 BC [764b, p. 287, 271]; 7, 8 — Iran, Neolithic and Bronze Age [716, pp. 14, 129]; 9 — ornamental elements among peoples of Africa, Far East, and Oceania [750, pls. 1, 23, 27].

universe (the triangle with chevrons is here an ideograph of the cloud, a sign of the heaven goddess). This symbol was already in existence in the Paleolithic (Fig. 212: 4). It is possible that the Paleolithic diagram is also a heaven symbol (disk) with its four sides stressed.

Maria Gimbutas, in her study of some Neolithic designs from Southeastern Europe, arrived at the conclusion that the oblique cross with herringbone designs in two opposing sectors followed a pattern on a woman's dress (Fig. 213: 7, 8). If this is so, there must have been some reason for the pattern to emerge and to appear on the female figure. The reason is that the pattern represents a pair of rain cloud signs (Fig. 213: 2-6) and belongs in the series of the goddess' binary emblems.

Why then was it placed on the statuette's breast (Fig. 213: 7)? If the goddess' priestesses were dressed that way, there must have been an original connection not with this grapheme alone. A. Miller gives examples of statuettes with an oblique cross on the breast (Fig. 214), accounting for this, as pointed out above, as the "solution of an ornamental problem." Quite a few ancient female statuettes bear the oblique cross in the form of two shoulder belts (Fig. 215: 1-3). That these crossbelts were not just symbolic, but also utilitarian, is evidenced by female statuettes with a single shoulder belt (Fig. 215: 4-6). Finally, there also

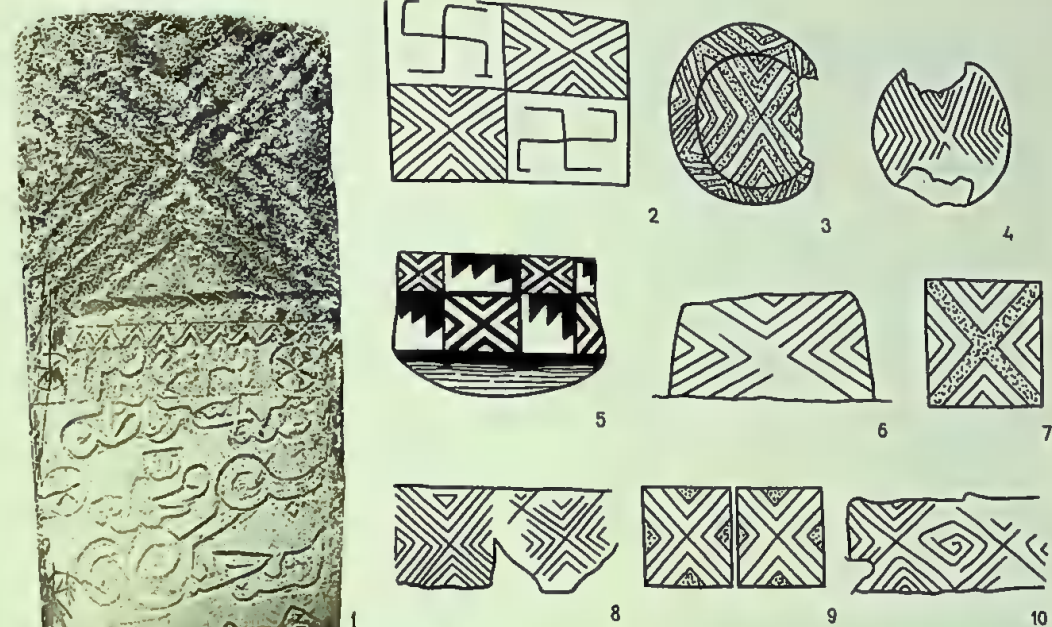


Fig. 212. Oblique cross with chevrons: 1 — Daghestan, Kujnik, 1900–1910; 2 — Daghestan, Itsari, 12th c.; 3 — Germany, Neolithic [719, p. 743]; 4 — Ukraine, Paleolithic [357, pl. 18]; 5 — Asia Minor, Neolithic [764, p. 343]; 6 — Crimea, ca 1500 BC [609, p. 40]; 7 — Crete, Neolithic [416, p. 334]; 8 — Central Asia, 19th c. [479, pl. 5]; 9 — Russia, 17th c. [57, p. 231]; 10 — Georgia, ca 1500 BC [145, p. 118].

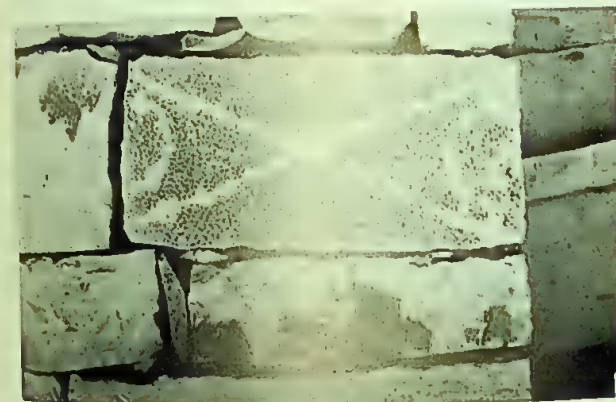


Fig. 213. Oblique cross with alternate insets: 1 — cornerstone of a house, Daghestan, Nijne Ishkarty; 2 — wooden case for spoons, Daghestan; 3 — carving on a wooden box, Daghestan [358, p. 39]; 4 — Egypt, ca 4000 BC [237, p. 136]; 5, 6 — Turkmenia, Neolithic [343, pp. 150, 154]; 7, 8 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 116].



Fig. 214. Oblique cross on human figure: 1–4 — Russia, 19th c.; Troy, ca 3000 BC; England, ca 3000 BC; Switzerland, ca 3000 BC [358, pp. 36–39].

exist ancient portrayals of men with two shoulder belts (Fig. 216). It appears that a characteristic detail of ancient human attire, male and female, were shoulder belts for carrying arms, bags, etc. This is yet another example of how an object externally resembling a sacred symbol was given sacral significance.

As the oblique cross was an emblem of the goddess, it was placed on pillars of dwellings. The custom was typical of a wide range of early farming cultures, in Southeastern Europe and Western Asia, as well as the Caucasus (Fig. 217). It will be shown later that the pillar was conceived as an incarnation of the goddess. As a supreme deity, she was apparently expected to protect the dwelling, and for

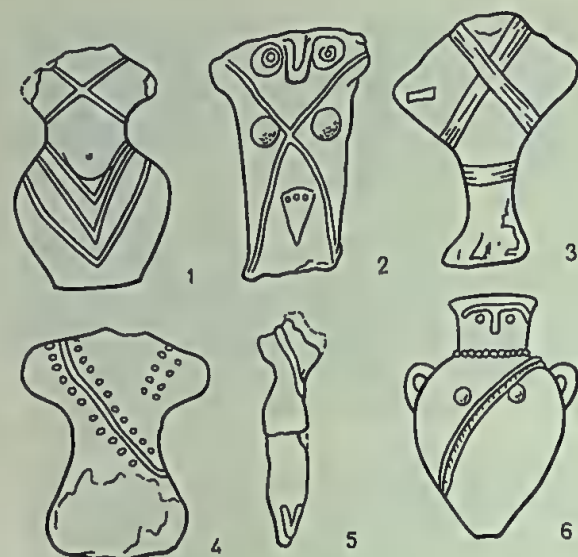


Fig. 215. Female figures with shoulder belts: 1 — Asia Minor, Neolithic [764b, p. 521]; 2 — Iran, Neolithic [488, pl. 212]; 3 — Sicily, ca 2000 BC [744, p. 99]; 4 — Crete, Neolithic [676a, p. 47]; 5 — Northern Caucasus, ca 3000 BC [550, p. 36]; 6 — Troy [827, p. 307].



Fig. 216. Male figures with shoulder belts: 1 — Georgia, ca 1000 CE; 2 — Benin, ca 1500 [404, p. 292].

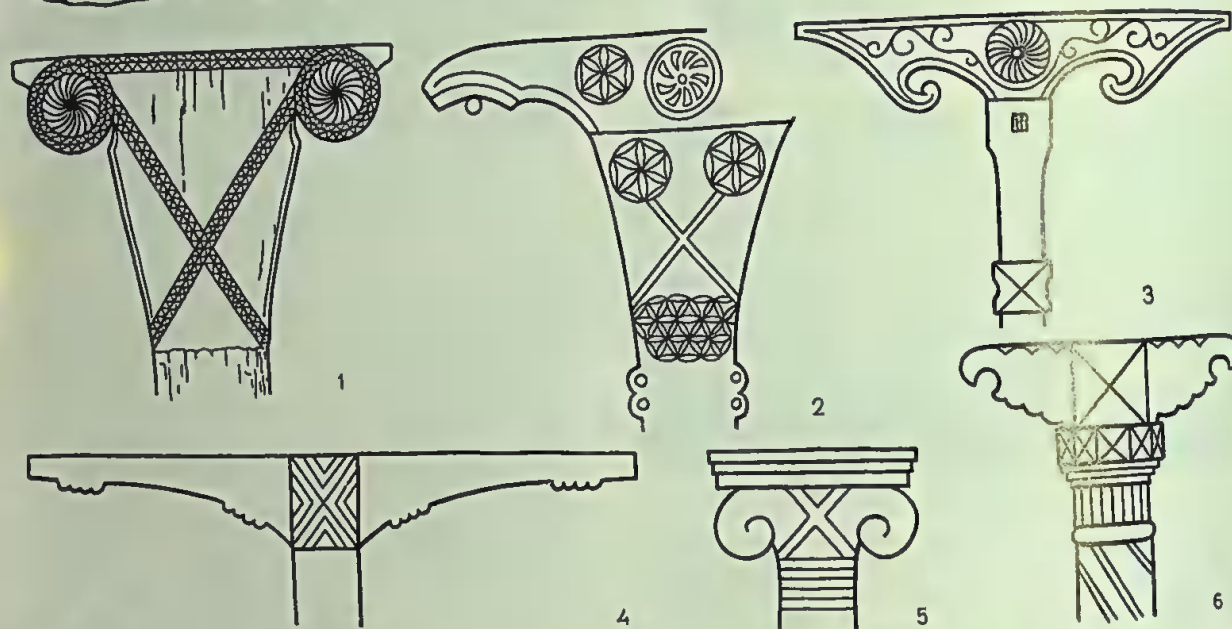


Fig. 217. Oblique cross on a pillar: 1 — highland Georgia; 2 — 17th c. mosque, Daghestan, Khuryuk; 3 — living house, Daghestan, Kudagu [140, fig. 16]; 4 — Tajikistan [382, p. 89]; 5 — Asia Minor, [607, p. 225]; 6 — Moldavia [459, p. 53].

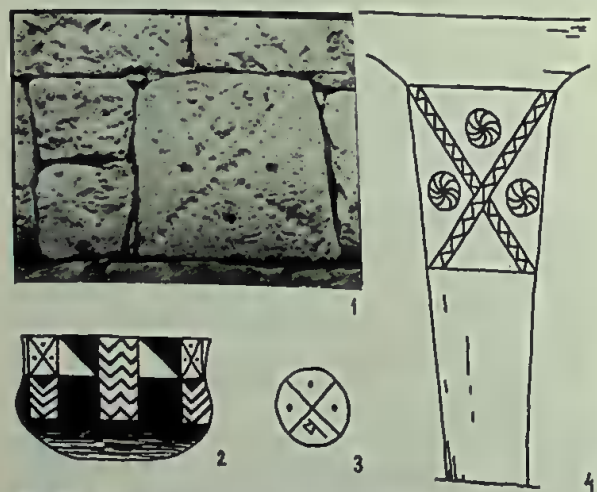


Fig. 218. Oblique cross with three dots: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Mugri; 2 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 [764b, p. 287]; 3 — France, ca 100 BC [733, p. 157]; 4 — Georgia, 18th c. [589b, plates].

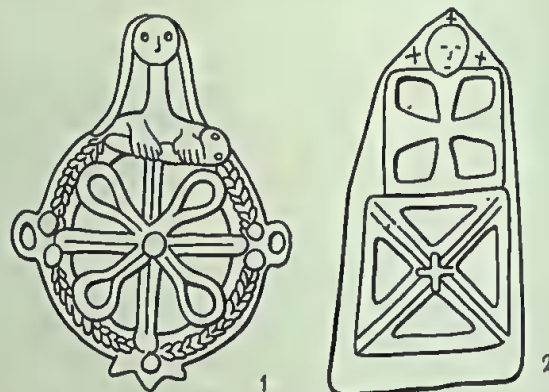


Fig. 219. Combinations of upright and oblique crosses in Christianity: 1 — Daghestan, 7th c. [585, p. 85]; 2 — France, Middle Ages.

that reason her ideograph decorated the central pillar of the house, its cornerstones, and the entrance.

During the post-Neolithic period, the oblique cross acquired a different meaning — that of a solar symbol. It thus became equivalent to the upright cross during the Bronze Age. There are many examples to this effect. A boat transports a cartouche with an oblique cross [580, Fig. 306] occupying the same position as the disk with a cross in other representations (Fig. 172). In Russian folk art one encounters a crossed square with wings [149, p. 479]. In origin, this is a symbol of the heaven goddess; however, like the winged disk, it could acquire a solar meaning. An oblique cross on a bird's figure [218, p. 93] may have a range of meanings, since the bird represented the goddess in the Neolithic tradition, while during the Bronze Age it personified the sun.

Consequently, the oblique cross as an emblem of the goddess was considered a feminine sign in the Neolithic period, but later, since the Bronze Age when it became a solar symbol, it came to be looked on as a masculine

sign. The oblique cross on the chest is thus an accessory of male Greek costume, and in Indonesia it is a specific detail in men's tattoo [20, p. 19]. Still, even in the system of Neolithic symbolism, the oblique cross could serve as a masculine emblem, because by dividing the rectangle into four parts, it formed the symbol of the "four sections of the earth" (Figs. 218; 160: 5).

A combination of the upright and oblique crosses existed in the medieval symbolism of Western Europe (Fig. 219: 2). The two superimposed crosses appear on the flag of Great Britain. An early medieval portrayal of the Virgin Mary and Child found in Daghestan contains combined upright and oblique crosses (Fig. 219: 1). These examples of Christian emblems go back to the Neolithic; very probably, they express the idea of the relationship between the earth god (upright cross) and the heaven goddess (oblique cross). In Ancient India, the eight-pointed star (a combination of the upright and oblique crosses) symbolized the union of the masculine and feminine principles creating life [595, p. 91].

THE SWASTIKA

In Daghestan, more specifically in its western highland part populated by the Avars, swastikas are frequently seen on masonry stones. It is hard to say when these and other images were made, since the time of a particular construction does not usually coincide with that of the manufacture of the engraved stones placed in the masonry of its walls; these stones could have been taken from demolished older structures, and the process was repeated many times. Some stones bearing the swastika appear more or less recent, with distinct carving lines (Fig. 220: 2); they may date from the 18th—19th centuries. Other stones look older, the carving weathered and blurred, with white salt spots formed on the surface; these stones may be several hundred years old. The swastika is encountered in Daghestan on 18th—19th century carpets (Fig. 220: 5) and in rock paintings (Fig. 220: 4).¹⁸³ It is cherished by the Avars to this day (Fig. 220: 3).

During the Neolithic and Aeneolithic, swastikas were typical in Western Asia, especially Iran, whose ancient artifacts contain various swastika-like patterns (Fig. 221). At that period the swastika was also known in Europe, Crete, and India.

The swastika spread wider during the Bronze Age (Fig. 222). It is common in archeological monuments dating from the second to the first millennia B.C. in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Western Siberia, and Central Asia; swastikas are abundant among the materials from excavations in Troy. At the same time, it was not known to the Scythians and to the inhabitants of the far west of Europe. It was extremely rare in Ancient Egypt. The Semites never used the symbol; it is absent in the artifacts of Phoenicia, Palestine, Arabia, Syria, Assyria,

Babylon, and Sumer. In India it was known since the Neolithic and acquired great popularity during the Bronze Age; later, a traditional religious emblem, the swastika was assimilated by Buddhism¹⁸⁴ and was introduced with this religion into China and Japan.

The swastika did not reach Africa, Southeastern Asia, Oceania, and Australia, but was known to American Indians (Fig. 223). In pre-Columbian America the swastika was a common symbol [862, pp. 757-1011]. Even admitting that this sophisticated sign was invented independently by ancient people in America and Western Asia, the chance coincidence of some of its details is impossible. The second of the American Indian designs shown here has dots between the arms of the swastika; this has parallels in the Old World (Fig. 220: 2). The jagged bulges at the ends of this particular swastika can be interpreted in terms of Asia Minor Neolithic symbolism (Fig. 83: 6). In monuments of pre-Columbian America and the ancient Southern Caucasus, the swastika appears on the forehead of a male statuette (Fig. 236), which, too, cannot be coincidental.

The swastika sign is relatively frequent in ancient Greek and Roman artifacts, though by that time the Greeks and Romans knew nothing about its former semantics; at all events, no information about such knowledge is available. The swastika was used as a Christian symbol during the early years of the Christian era [805, pp. 271-284], but was later replaced by the cross. It was a common feature in Russian folk ornament until the end of the nineteenth century.

In the Southern Caucasus swastikas are frequently encountered. Other monotheistic religions — Christianity, Islam, and Judaism — also adopted ancient pagan symbols as their emblems: the cross, the crescent, and the seven-branched candelabrum and six-pointed star.

¹⁸³ The Daghestan rock wall paintings are probably from the Bronze Age.



Fig. 220. Swastika in Daghestan: 1, 2 — designs on stones, Urada and Khushlada; 3 — grave monument, Rughelda, ca 1950; 4 — signs from rock wall pictures, Bronze Age, near the settlement of Chinahita; 5 — old rug of local production.

countered in archeological materials from the 16th to 6th centuries B.C. In the Northern Caucasus the swastika appeared during the Bronze Age. It can be found on Kobán artifacts of the end of the second millennium B.C. (Fig. 222: 5), and on pottery in Daghestan and Chechenia of the 9th to 6th centuries B.C. In more recent times, the swastika was known mainly to the mountain dwellers of the Greater Caucasus in Daghestan, Chechenia, and northeastern Georgia (Fig. 224). In Daghestan, the swastika

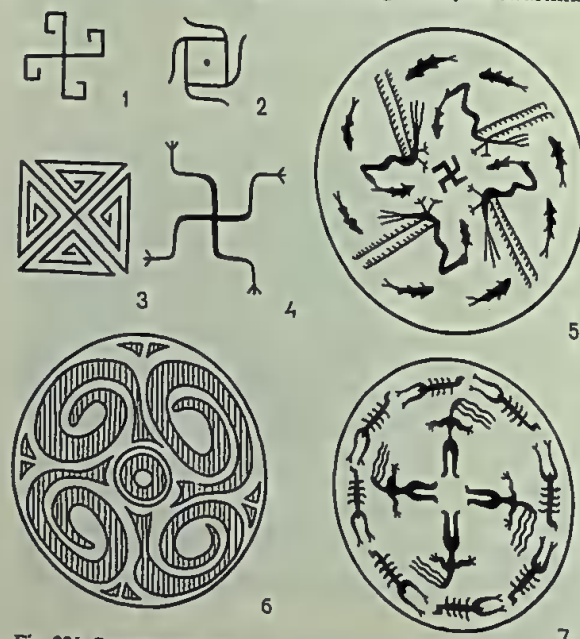


Fig. 221. Swastika-like Neolithic and Aeneolithic figures: 1 — Central Europe [696, p. 90]; 2 — Asia Minor [763, p. 209]; 3—7 — Iran [716, pp. 21, 49, 59; 792, p. 251].

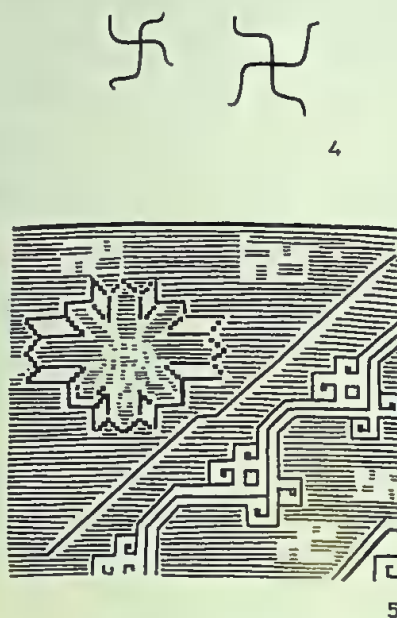


Fig. 222. Swastika in Eurasia during Bronze and Early Iron Ages: 1 — Yugoslavia, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 473]; 2 — Western Siberia, ca 2000 BC [252, p. 212]; 3 — Ukraine, ca 2000 BC; 4 — Russia, ca 1000 BC [33b, p. 53]; 5 — Northern Caucasus, ca 1000 BC [646b, p. 11].

sign is common in the area adjacent to Chechenia and Georgia, i.e., in Avaria.

Thus, the swastika symbol was common during the Middle Ages in the highland region encompassing western Daghestan, eastern Checheno-Ingushetia, and the adjacent territories of northeastern Georgia. It is possible that in ancient times this region was inhabited by an ethnic community which used the swastika and other typical cult symbols of the relevant complex, and that they were later inherited by various tribes populating the territory.

Carved stones bearing an ornamental motif in the form of a swastika with spiral ends (Fig. 225: 1-3) are frequently encountered in settlements of the Ghidatl community in

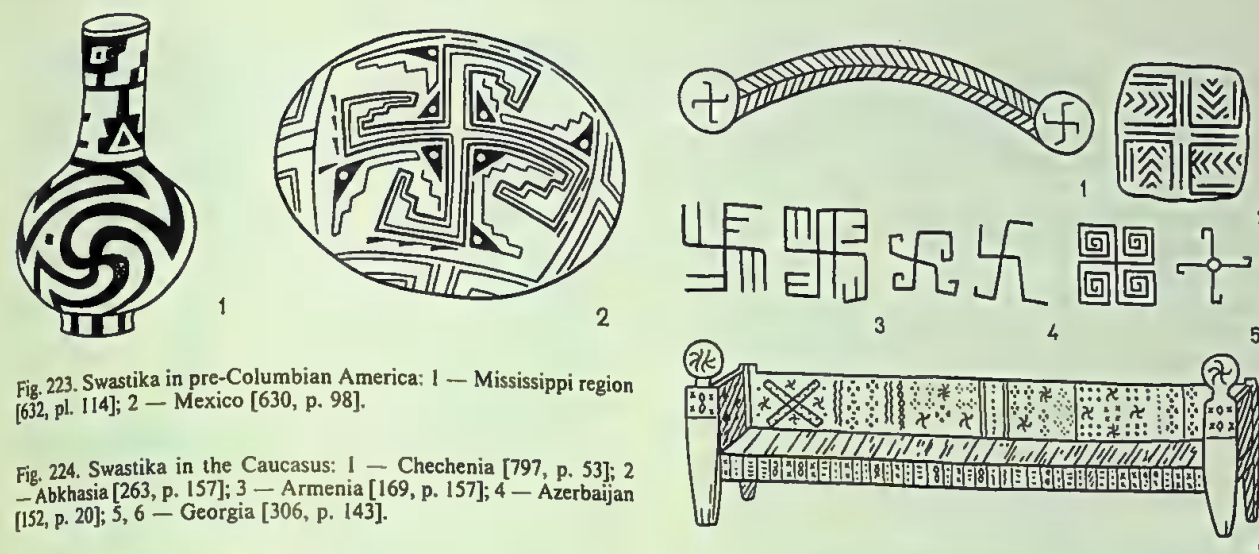


Fig. 223. Swastika in pre-Columbian America: 1 — Mississippi region [632, pl. 114]; 2 — Mexico [630, p. 98].

Fig. 224. Swastika in the Caucasus: 1 — Chechenia [797, p. 53]; 2 — Abkhazia [263, p. 157]; 3 — Armenia [169, p. 157]; 4 — Azerbaijan [152, p. 20]; 5, 6 — Georgia [306, p. 143].



Fig. 225. Swastiko-spirals: 1—3 — villages of Khotoda, Urada, and Somoda, Daghestan; 4 — Chechenia [797, p. 53]; 5 — pre-Columbian America [749, p. 78]; 6 — Spain [644, p. 28].



Fig. 226. Chain of swastiko-spirals: carved stone, Daghestan, Machada, ca 1800.

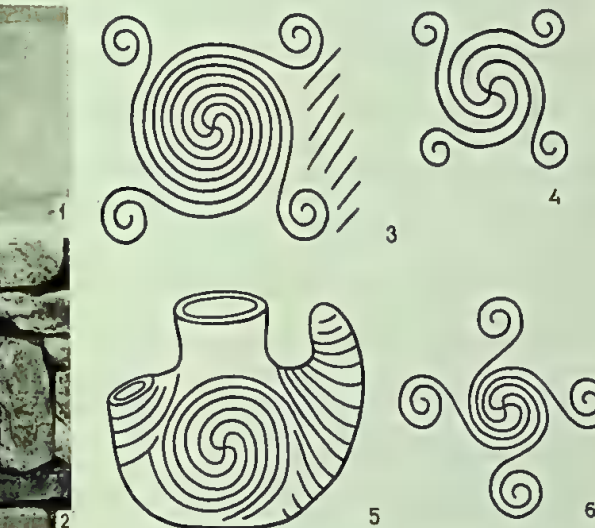


Fig. 227. Swastika with zigzag crossing: 1 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, p. 349]; 2 — Khevsur, ca 1900 [51, pl. 4]; 3 — Buryat, ca 1900 [419, p. 231]; 4, 5 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764, pp. 389, 396].

Daghestan. A sequence of swastiko-spirals, arranged in a chain, forms an exquisite ornamental pattern (Fig. 226). While the usual form of swastika is rather common in the world, spiraled swastikas occur only in Europe and pre-Columbian America, as well as in the Northeastern Caucasus (Fig. 225: 5).

Opinions differ as to the origin and semantics of the swastika.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Andrew Lang maintained that the swastika came into being as a "natural ornamental element," rather than as a symbol [756, p. 53]. I. Savenkov voiced the conviction that the swastika was "formed from intersecting lines of the body and the curved line of the arms folded in sacramental position" [478, pp. 60, 292] (see Fig. 379: 4). But, if this is so, why did the body line acquire bends? J. Lechler declared that the swastika was a symbol of "solar rotation, restoration of life, infinity" [749, p. 2]. H. Raphaelian noted the swastika in the spaces between four T-shaped figures in the pattern of an oriental carpet, and decided that the symbol originated from such a combination (Fig. 101c). M. Gimbutas believes that the swastika is the cross with rounded ends representing four crescents which symbolize four lunar phases [696, p. 91]. There is an opinion that the swastika emerged as a portrayal of a revolving burning cross [730b, p. 1517]; but such ritual of a burning cross is known; if it did exist somewhere at some time, it is too rare to explain the prevalence of the swastika.

E. Kletnova expressed the view that the swastika derived from an intersection of two zigzags allegedly symbolizing lightning [239, p. 10]. A crosswise intersection of zigzags forming a swastika-like figure is in fact encountered in the ornaments of various peoples (Fig. 227: 1-4). Its initial meaning was two symbols of a river (terrestrial waters) combined with a cross sign meant as an earth symbol (Fig. 227: 5). This, however, is a particular case of graphic figures accidentally resulting in the swastika. The origin of the swastika was different. It was not mere chance that led to its genesis; the symbol was produced on the basis of certain beliefs and of certain symbols which expressed those beliefs.

According to one opinion, the sign depicts an implement used by the ancients to produce fire, and for that reason it became a symbol of fire and of heavenly fire, the sun. Ancient Indian texts give instructions how to procure sacred fire before the altar of the deity Agni. A wooden swastika was placed flat on the ground, then a vertical stick was inserted into a hollow at its center and rotated until fire appeared [827, p. 103; 554, p. 159]. It is clear that in this case the swastika shape was not determined by the process of producing fire: the object with a hollow to accommodate the stick could be of any conceivable shape, even a formless chunk of wood (Fig. 178: 2). It was not made into a swastika for practical purposes, but because the swastika was a symbol associated with the cult of the deity in whose honor the sacred fire was produced.

V. Gorodtsov adduces a swastika he allegedly observed on a Paleolithic figurine from Mezin (the Ukraine) [119, p. 281]. However, detailed publications dealing with the Mezin finds [357; 603] do not note the sign or even mention it.



Fig. 228. Swastika as earth symbol: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 309]; 2 — widespread grapheme; 3 — Ancient Crete [817, p. 239]; 4, 5 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, p. 220; 763, p. 209]; 6 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764, p. 299]; 7 — Central Asia, ca 1500 BC [480, p. 52]; 8 — Germany, ca 1500 BC [830, p. 330]; 9 — Central Asia, Neolithic [572, p. 16]; 10, 11 — Southern Caucasus, Bronze Age [719, p. 497; 361, p. 144]; 12 — Lapland [756, p. 8]; 13 — Ancient Crete [839, p. 252]; 14 — Asia Minor, Classical Antiquity [856, p. 187].

The first known swastika designs date back to the early symbolism stage of Western Asian Neolithic cultures. A swastika-like figure from Asia Minor, dating from the seventh millennium B.C. (Fig. 228: 4), is composed of four crosswise spirals, i.e., signs of vegetation; it seems to be a variant of the ideograph expressing the notion "four



Fig. 229. Swastika with rounded branches: 1-3 — carved stones in Daghestan (Rughelda, Khusheda, and Ghilib); 4 — Ingushetia, ca 300 BC [388, p. 180]; 5 — Armenia, ca 1700 [797, p. 53]; 6 — Northern Caucasus, ca 300 BC [220, p. 41]; 7 — Russia, 18th c. [58, p. 58].

quarters of the world," "four areas of the earth." Another swastika-like figure from the early Neolithic stage in Asia Minor (Fig. 228: 5) consists of an earth sign (a square with a dot) and four adjacent plant-like appendages.¹⁸⁵ It is in such compositions that one should see the origin of the swastika and in particular of the variant with rounded ends (Fig. 229). This assumption is confirmed, for example, by an ancient Cretan swastika complete with four plant elements (Fig. 228: 3).

For a deeper insight into the origin of the swastika, one may refer to a design from the sixth millennium B.C., also from Asia Minor (Fig. 228: 6), consisting of four signs of cultivated soil (a toothed figure) with plant shoots issuing from them; there is also a toothed detail at the ends of a swastika from pre-Columbian America (Fig. 223: 2).

On a Southern Caucasian Bronze Age ceramic vessel one can see a swastika-like figure composed of four earth signs (rectangles with dots), designating a field under crops (Fig. 228: 10). The swastika-like design in Figure 228: 13 may be interpreted as a four-fold representation of a snake and seed. In Figure 228: 3, plants grow from four dots designating seeds between the arms of a swastika.

Similar swastika-shaped designs dating from the second millennium B.C. found in Central Asia and Central Europe (Fig. 228: 7, 8) are composed of horned serpents. Arrows (Fig. 228: 12) or crescents (Fig. 228: 14) combined with the swastika are symbols of the Neolithic earth god. The Laplanders considered the grapheme shown in Figure 228: 12 a sign of lightning [756, p. 8]. In pagan Scandinavia, the swastika was a symbol of lightning and an emblem of Thor [730a, p. 387].

¹⁸⁵ A similar pattern has been found among rock paintings in Brazil [720, p. 34].

In an Early Neolithic design from Asia Minor (Fig. 228: 1) cogged elements (earth signs) arranged in a swastika shape are adjacent to the cross, an emblem of the earth god. In another Neolithic design, from Southern Turkmenia (Fig. 228: 9), the swastika appears as a cross. Like the cross, the swastika was painted on the bottom of vessels [170, p. 256], which suggests that it too was a symbol of the lower regions.

It is believed in India that the swastika, like the spiral, favors childbirth [756, p. 7]. This is understandable, because the two signs were once symbols of the god looked upon as incarnating impregnation by the male.

It is of interest for our understanding of the swastika's original meaning to examine a design on a plaque from the Southern Caucasus (Fig. 228: 11). This object was produced during the Bronze Age, but the design on it reflects the Neolithic tradition. In the center is a square (an earth sign) with a swastika on it. Within the square are triangles with adjacent lines; by analogy (Fig. 83: 4), they designate earth being irrigated. Outside, next to the corners of the square, are plant signs (cf. Fig. 157: 3), or perhaps rain clouds watering the earth; above these are zigzags designating heavenly moisture. All around are water fowl on a circle, which may designate the ocean skirting the terrestrial world.

These and many other examples indicate that the Neolithic swastika is identical to the Neolithic cross, i.e., it was a conventional designation of the notion "four quarters of the world" and served as a symbol of the earth god. Recollection that the swastika used to symbolize the four parts of the world is recorded in medieval Islamic manuscripts; the concept is known to American Indians to this day [756, pp. 13, 40].

There are a great many examples of swastikas with rounded arms (Fig. 229). The assumption that such a swastika resulted from a crosswise arrangement of two S signs [749, p. 39] is largely speculative and denies the ideographic meaning of the symbol. The curved lines here, as in other cases analyzed above, designate plants. This

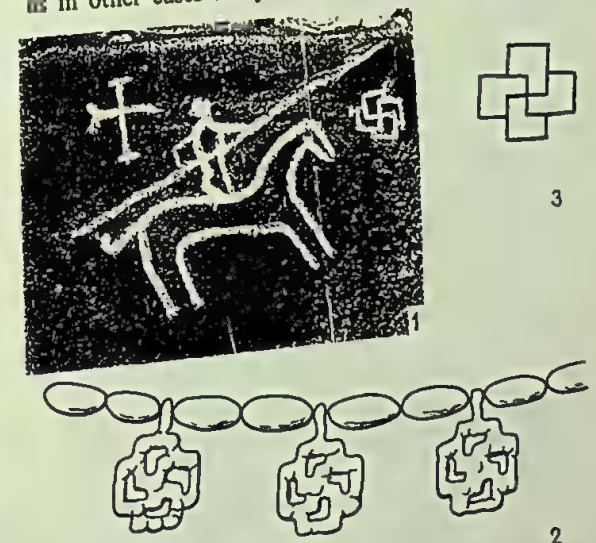


Fig. 230. Swastika with triple bends: 1 — engraved stone, Daghestan, Tidib; 2 — Russia, ca 1200 [158, p. 14]; 3 — Western Europe, ca 1200 [749, p. 35].

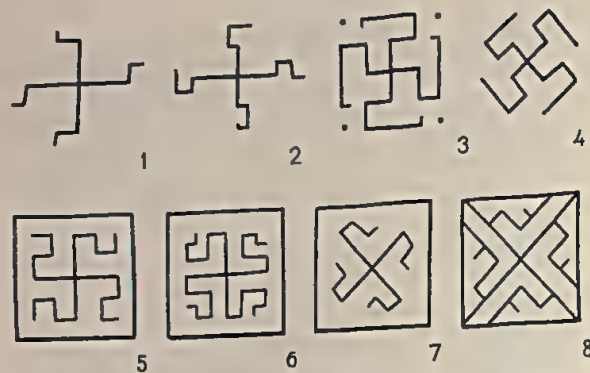


Fig. 231. Swastika with complicated bends: 1, 2 — carved stones, Daghestan, Khushtada; 3 — Southern Caucasus, ca 1000 BC; 4 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 3000 BC [701, fig. 254]; 5—8 — Etruscan, 800—600 BC [693, pls. 1, 2].

variety of swastika is morphologically related to the oldest examples of swastika-like patterns (Fig. 228: 4).

A three-fold bending of the swastika ends (Fig. 230: 1) marks yet another variety. This type is not unique to Daghestan; analogies have been found in medieval Russia and medieval Western Europe (Fig. 230: 2, 3). The sign occurs on Bronze Age artifacts [870, Fig. 262]. The broken branches of the swastika obviously derived from rounded ones and therefore represent four plant signs. There are also other variants of swastikas with branches in the form of broken lines (Fig. 231); their origin seems to be the same. Swastikas with branched arms (Fig. 232) can also be considered as compositions of four stylized representations of plant forms.

A "feathered" swastika (Fig. 233) may be regarded as a four-piece comb/rain sign, i.e., a symbol of the heaven goddess. Such must also be the meaning of swastika-like patterns (Fig. 221: 5-7) composed of elements symbolic of the goddess (female figure, culture, fish). Sometimes there is a circle or a disk in the middle of the swastika (Figs. 228: 8; 229: 6, 7); here have the heaven symbol in place of the cross, the earth symbol. This means that some swastikas symbolized the notion "four divisions of the world" with reference to the terrestrial world, others to the celestial world. It may therefore be concluded that the conception of masculine and feminine swastikas reflected in ancient

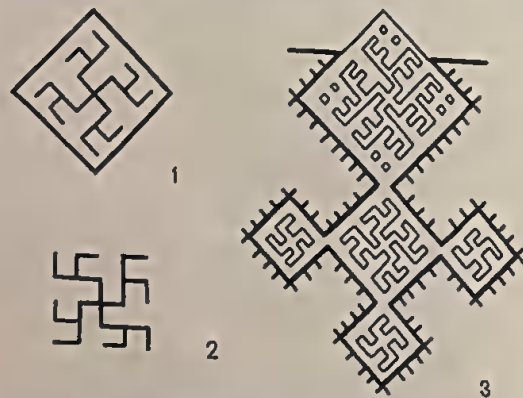


Fig. 232. Swastika with ramified branches: 1 — Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, p. 48]; 2 — Hungary, ca 1000 BC [33e, p. 70]; 3 — Russian embroidery, 19th c.

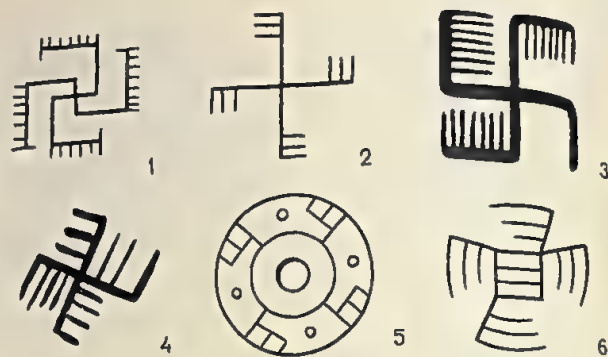


Fig. 233. "Feathered" swastikas in Neolithic and Bronze Ages: 1 — Eastern Europe [870, fig. 254]; 2 — Western Europe [858, p. 95]; 3 — Iran [716, p. 20]; 4 — Southern Caucasus [719, p. 497]; 5 — Troy; 6 — prehistoric India [677, p. 222].

Indian texts goes back to Neolithic symbolism. It should, however, be noted that Neolithic "feminine" swastikas are relatively rare, while "masculine" ones definitely prevail, so that the swastika is generally an earth symbol.

A design from pre-Columbian America (Fig. 235: 4) depicting an eagle regarded as a "sun bird" since the Bronze Age and a "thunderbird" during the Neolithic (i.e., it represented a male being in both cases), with a feminine swastika (consisting of four combs, symbols of the heaven goddess) may be explained by the fact that New World symbolism had no Neolithic meanings, as it was assimilated from the Old World at about the end of the second millennium B.C.¹⁸⁶ This example shows that the meaning of these swastikas was already forgotten in post-Neolithic times and they had the same meaning as other swastikas which had acquired solar significance.

With the Bronze Age the semantics of the swastika, like that of nearly all other Neolithic symbols, changed. At the end of the 19th century Karl von den Steinen showed that in materials of the Bronze Age the swastika was a bird representation [839]. A. Bobrinskoy quoted further evidence in favor of this hypothesis [71]. It is true that the Bronze Age left many examples of swastikas resembling schematic representations of birds (Fig. 234). In particular, Figure 234: 18, according to Steinen and Bobrinskoy, is a conventional representation of a bird brooding on eggs (designated by four little crosses).

K. Steinen thought the swastika represented not any bird, but specifically the stork. He believed that the stork was venerated for building its nest on roofs, and that the regions where the swastika spread in ancient times coincided with the regions (Europe and the Caucasus) where storks hatched their young [839, p. 271]. However, eighty further years of archeological studies have shown that the swastika was popular far beyond these regions; moreover, the oldest specimens were discovered outside them. Notwithstanding this, Steinen was correct in principle. The relation between the swastika and the bird is

¹⁸⁶Thor Heyerdahl believes that at about 1200 B.C. the American continent was colonized by Eastern Mediterraneans. This theory may explain numerous analogies between the cultures of the Old and New Worlds [569, pp. 55, 68]. Such contacts could also have been accomplished through Atlantis, if it really existed [175, pp. 318, 348].

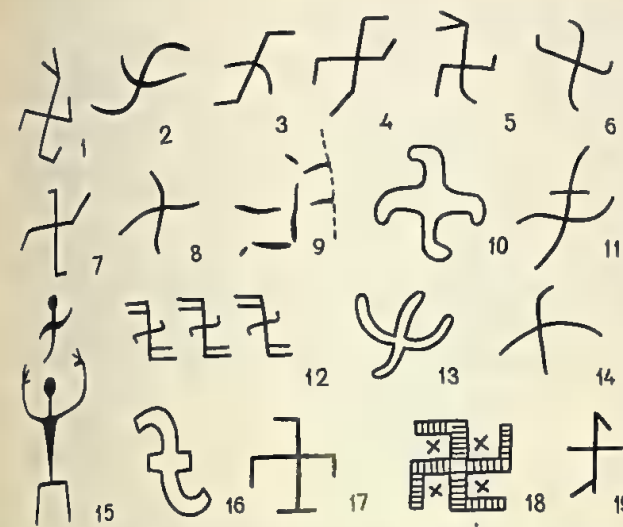


Fig. 234. Swastika-like signs resembling flying bird: 1—3 — according to A. Bobrinskoy [71, p. 72]; 4—6 — Troy [827, pl. 26, p. 188]; 7, 8 — Azerbaijan, Bronze and Middle Ages [146, pp. 40, 22]; 9 — Greece, ca 2000 BC [618f, p. 146]; 10 — Sarmatian, 200—100 BC [487, p. 367]; 11 — Ukraine, ca 1500 BC [532, p. 244]; 12 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 34]; 13 — medieval Russia [464, p. 232]; 14 — Southern Russia, ca 1000 BC [553, p. 198]; 15 — China, ca 1500 BC [222, p. 141]; 16 — Volga region, Bronze Age [208, pl. 5]; 17 — Ingushetia, sign on a tower in Beini; 18 — Greece, ca 800 BC [659, p. 455]; 19 — Italy, Bronze Age [839, p. 261].

confirmed not only by the similarity of the corresponding graphemes. Ancient Indian sources inform us that the swastika did designate the bird [17, p. 120].

The swastika in Indian monuments symbolized the sun [659b, p. 454]; proceeding from evidence not prior to the second millennium B.C. the sun was imagined as a bird. There is an opinion that the Indian word *swastika* derived from the combination of *Su*, the name of the sun bird, and *astika*, the name of a deity which personified the two halves of the year, warm and cold.¹⁸⁷ A swastika with the ends of the cross bent to the left (feminine) symbolized the flight of the sun bird to the north in autumn and winter and those with right bends (masculine) to the south in spring and summer [717, pp. 119, 329]. These data agree with the oppositions "left—right" and "feminine—masculine," and with the hypothesis on the relation of the four seasons of the year to two female and two male deities.

The Russian tradition sees the right and left swastikas somewhat differently: the former designates movement with the sun and symbolizes good, the latter designates movement in the opposite direction and is considered bad (the opposition "good—evil" correlates with "masculine—feminine"). Combinations of both types of swastika are known on ancient artifacts from various continents (Fig. 235: 5-7). Apparently they symbolized two half-year solar states.

Thus, in the sphere of cult conceptions involving sun worship, the swastika had the same meaning as the cross: it was a symbol of the sun bird. It is possible that the swastika designated the annual movement of the sun, and the cross the diurnal movement. In fact, the Aztec hieroglyph in

¹⁸⁷Other etymologies of this term also exist. For example, it is believed that the first part of *su-asti-ka* means 'good,' the second 'existence,' and the third is a suffix [853, p. 270]. Neither of these etymologies, however, explains the word *sauwastika*, used in India for the inverse, left-handed, swastika.

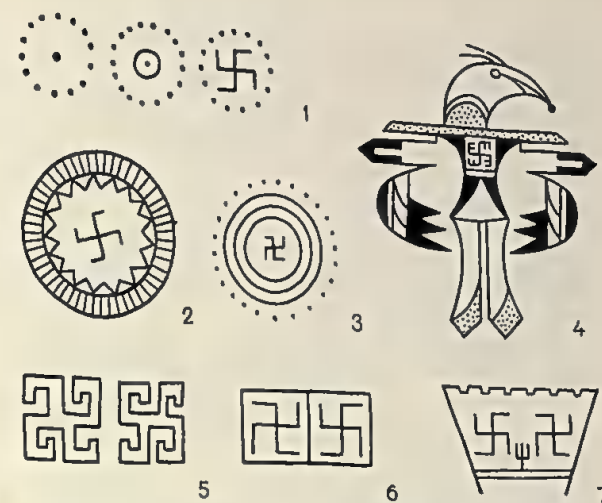


Fig. 235. Swastika as sun symbol: 1 — Ancient Greece [618d, pl. 32]; 2 — Sarmatian [495, p. 37]; 3 — Celtic [749, p. 53]; 4 — North American Indian [847, p. 35]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 1500 BC [749, p. 66]; 6 — Etruscan [749, p. 50]; 7 — pre-Columbian America [749, p. 79].

the form of a disk with a cross meant "day," while the disk with the swastika meant "year."

Some graphic designs point to the solar meaning of the swastika. Like the cross, the swastika was not infrequently positioned within a circle (Fig. 220: 1) which was considered an image of the solar disk in the Bronze Age; it is sometimes surrounded by dots, teeth, and beams (Fig. 235: 1-3) all of which had solar meaning during the Bronze Age. However, all these circle and swastika graphemes are of Neolithic origin; in the early farming religion they symbolized the relations between the heaven goddess and the earth god.

A carved stone from Daghestan bears a design consisting of a spiraled swastika with strokes on its side (Fig. 225: 3). If the strokes designate sun beams, the spiral-swastika was a solar symbol. Spiraled swastikas in combination with the ram symbol (Fig. 81: 1) also support the assumption that this figure was a solar symbol. Though, if these Daghestanian specimens go back directly to the early farmers' religion, the swastika is there a heaven symbol (feminine religion, the swastika has also been shown to have existed), and the swastikas have also been shown to have existed, and the combination of the rain or ram sign with a symbol of heaven is legitimate. This view would not have remained on the hypothetical level if spiraled swastikas from the Neolithic period had been discovered.

During the Neolithic the male deity of the nether regions



Fig. 236. Idol with swastika: 1 — Armenia, Bronze Age [170, p. 222]; 2 — Aztec [656, p. 57].

was venerated. It appears that later male statuettes with swastikas on the forehead (Fig. 236) are associated with this concept. But since the male deity was related to the sun during the post-Neolithic period, these male statuettes may have represented the sun god.

In pre-Columbian America the swastika was an emblem of the sun god [656, p. 57]. For this reason, the American representation of a bird with a swastika on its breast (Fig. 235: 4), as a bird with a cross (Fig. 180: 1), may be regarded as an image of the solar deity. However, in the perspective of beliefs stemming from the early farming religion, this image should be interpreted otherwise: the fire bird in

archaic mythopoetic conceptions was the underworld god who rose to the sky, and the swastika was originally his symbol.

In Ancient India and Greece the swastika was regarded as a sign symbolizing good. Taking into account the meaning assigned to the swastika in cases when it could be supported by documentation (ancient manuscripts, ethnographic evidence), Vladimir Stasov, the nineteenth century Russian art critic, wrote that the swastika was "one of the oldest good signs, a sign of well-wishing and for warding off misfortune" [502, p. 17]. This was perhaps its meaning on the medieval carved stones in Daghestan.

TRACKS AND TRAPS

Paleolithic cave paintings often include nonfigurative dotted patterns of obviously symbolic significance. The dots are generally arranged in rows (Figs. 167: 2; 331: 1). The available data are insufficient to make a definitive interpretation possible; yet, as a tentative variant, it may be suggested that they are conventional representations of animal tracks. If the dots form a circle (Fig. 237: 1), the design may mean that the animal was tracked down, caught by the hunter.

The plate from Malta (in Siberia), mentioned earlier, has designs on both sides: one depicts three snakes, the other a composition of dotted spirals and bispirls (Fig. 237: 2). The latter, too, may be snake representations. But the question arises: if snakes were shown once by lines, why should anyone want to show them again by dots? Could the bispirls here mean animal tracks? The spiral, on the other hand, could express the idea that the animal had finished its flight and become the hunter's prey.

Paintings in the La Pileta cave (Spain) (Fig. 237: 3) are evidence that animal tracks and enclosures for catching

animals were in fact depicted during the Upper Paleolithic. The paintings show animal tracks and heads; this suggests that the tracks were identified with the animals, that they represented the animal the hunters were pursuing.

Engraved on a mammoth ivory plate found in Belorussia are arc-like signs rather like brackets (Fig. 238: 3). The archeologist who published this find refers to the designs as "roof-like drawings" [429, p. 85]. However, a Paleolithic bone object from Siberia exhibits a number of such signs arranged in rows (Fig. 238: 2). These may be tracks of wild horses which were among the principal objects of the hunt during the Paleolithic.

A female statuette from Siberia (Fig. 238: 1) also shows such marks in rows of mechanical regularity, disregarding the shape of the figurine, as though following their own paths. A. Okladnikov, who found the statuette, believes that the ornament suggests the furry texture of a garment. However, to begin with, why should fur be represented in such an odd manner, by arches rather than strokes, which would be more appropriate? Secondly, why is the ornament independent of the figure's shape? Third, how can one suppose that ancient people wore coats with the fur on the outside, like modern women? Such a fur coat does not

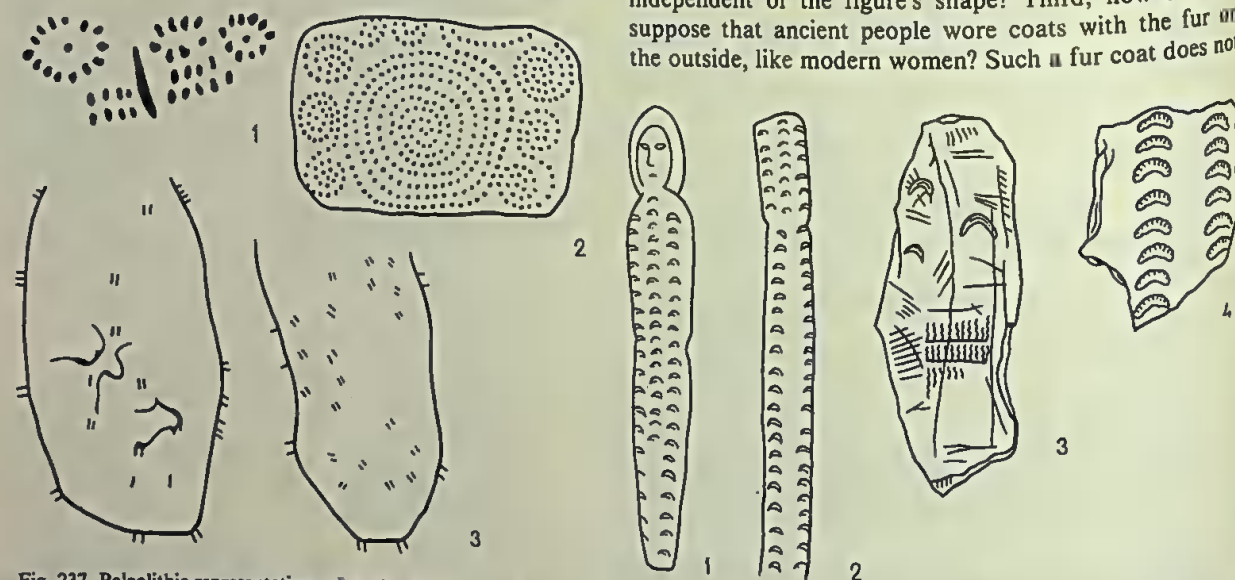


Fig. 237. Paleolithic representations of tracks and game enclosures: 1 — Mongolia [402, p. 45]; 2 — Siberia [111, pl. 11]; 3 — Spain [181, p. 105].

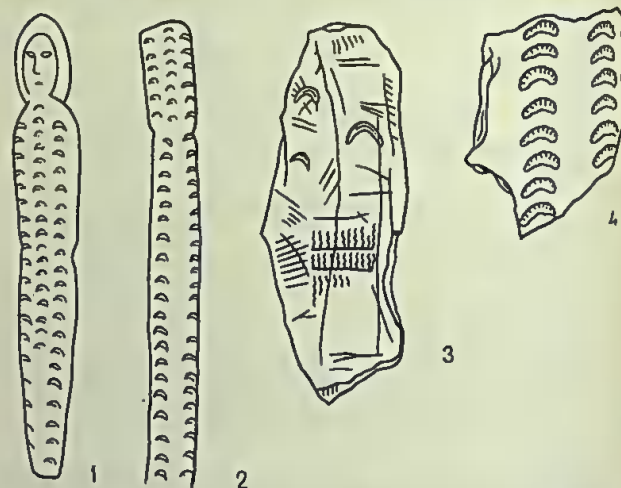


Fig. 238. Horse tracks: 1, 2 — Siberia, Paleolithic [401, pl. 1; 111, pl. 10]; 3 — Belorussia, Paleolithic [429, p. 85]; 4 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 2000 BC [431, p. 15].

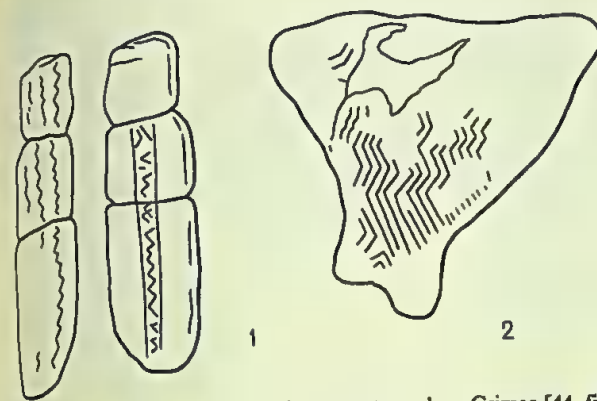


Fig. 239. Paleolithic objects with zigzag pattern: 1 — Crimea [44, fig. 19]; 2 — Ukraine [603, pl. 54].

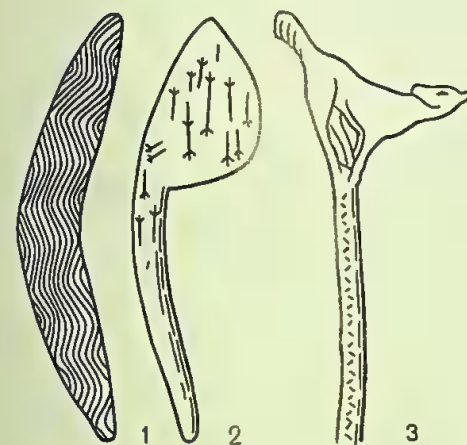


Fig. 240. Hunting implements with images of animals and tracks: 1, 2 — Australian boomerangs [703, p. 235]; 3 — spear thrower, Western Europe, Late Paleolithic [401, pl. 16].



Fig. 241. Symbolic zigzag pattern, Paleolithic: 1, 3, 4 — Western Europe [401, pl. 2, p. 100; 719, p. 158]; 2 — Siberia [708, p. 3].

protect from cold as it should, and it must be worn with clothing underneath which of course did not exist in the Paleolithic. Fur garments were most probably worn then as Arctic ethnic groups wear them nowadays, with the fur inside and next to the skin. Finally, such ornaments sometimes occur on naked female statuettes [709, p. 119]. No, it is not fur texture that the rows of brackets are meant to represent, but the tracks of hunted horses. The "mistress of animals" known from the myths of Arctic peoples and of the ancient Greeks and Romans was expected to be concerned with the hunt and ensure its success.

Ornaments depicting horse tracks continued in use by force of tradition during the Bronze Age (Fig. 238: 4). The animal track promised a successful hunt. An image of a track thus became a lucky sign. Hence the contemporary belief that the find of a horseshoe augurs well. Horseshoes are frequent motifs in Daghestan, for example in embroidered rugs and on grain-storage bins. The Daghestanians, like Europeans, fixed a horseshoe on their threshold or on the door of their house for good luck.

Zigzag ornaments were common during the Paleolithic (Fig. 239). These zigzags cannot be considered merely decorative, for, as shown above, they could be placed on shapeless objects where decoration would be meaningless. Those objects played the same role as paper in our days on which prayers are written. The graphemes on them exist as it were in their own right, containing their own meaning.

The zigzag is an elementary design, and one can hardly regard it as having emerged once and having the same meaning in all cultures. As we have seen, the zigzag could designate snake, river, water, and rain. In some cases, however, it rather designated animal tracks.

Australian boomerangs sometimes bear images of animals being hunted, or zigzags (Fig. 240: 1, 2). The meaning of both seems to have been the same: a wish for luck on a hunting expedition. This was probably also the meaning of the zigzag (a chain of tracks) on a Paleolithic javelin-throwing device (Fig. 240: 3).

In Paleolithic art, zigzag or wavy lines are often shown on animal figures (Fig. 241: 1, 3, 4); they are seen as part of the animal, its attribute. M. Hoernes thought these zigzags represented animal ribs [719, p. 158], not finding it strange that ribs should be shown by conventional signs, while the body of the animal was drawn naturalistically. The zigzag accompanying an animal cannot be considered as portraying ribs, because the grapheme can also appear behind the animal's figure (Fig. 241: 2); it is obviously an animal track. A variant of the zigzag design (Fig. 241: 3), often found decorating cult objects (Fig. 242: 5, 6), became a common ornamental motif which survived in Russia and Daghestan until the 17th—18th centuries (Fig. 242: 2, 3).

Primitive thinking identifies an object, living being, or phenomenon with their particular attributes. The track of a living being was a part of it, attesting to its presence. The animal track is of substantial practical significance in the life of the hunter: it leads to the game. The track was a symbol of the prospective catch, the symbol of food sustaining human life. Rows of zigzags (Figs. 239: 2; 240: 1) could represent a graphically expressed supplication for abundant game. Many zigzags would mean "many animals," "much meat," "much food."

A bracelet from Mezin exhibits a combination of zigzags and meanders (Fig. 243: 2). This pattern recurred in Eastern Europe ten thousand years later (Fig. 243: 3). A similar motif was found in Daghestanian rock wall paintings (Fig. 243: 4) and in faraway Australia (Fig. 243: 1). The zigzags apparently designate animal tracks, and the meander is a trap for catching the animal. This kind of trap actually existed (Fig. 244: 2).

Thousands of years went by, peoples disappeared, others came into being, but cult-mythological conceptions, passing



Fig. 242. Zigzag with hatching and its prototypes: 1 — Ingushetia, 12th c.; 2 — Daghestan, ca 1700; 3 — Russia, ca 1700; 4 — Ukraine, Bronze Age; 5, 6 — Paleolithic objects [659a, p. 232; 703, pl. 93].



Fig. 243. Zigzags and meanders: 1 — Australia [223, p. 257]; 2 — Ukraine, ca 17000 BC [367, pl. 24]; 3 — Rumania, ca 4000 BC [468b, p. 20]; 4 — Daghestan, ca 2000 BC [7, p. 17].

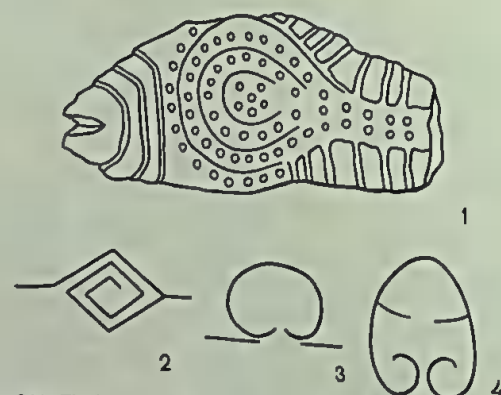


Fig. 244. Fishing traps: 1 — Paleolithic object, Siberia [111, pl. 10]; 2, 3 — arrangement of fishing traps [130, p. 139]; 4 — plan of stone laying, Solovki Island (White Sea) [92, pp. 53, 54].

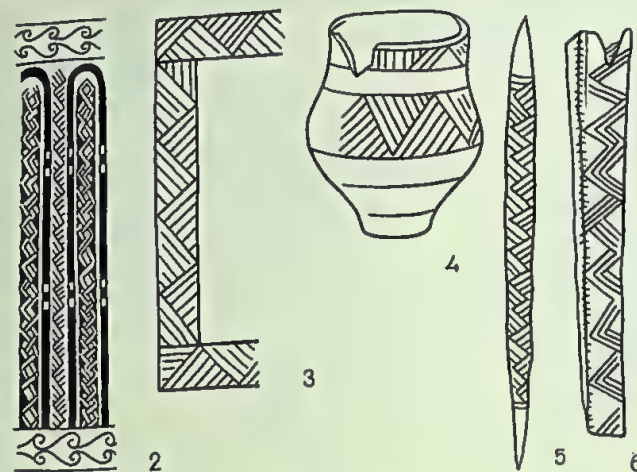


Fig. 245. Neolithic meanders: 1 — Norway, ca 4000 BC [223, p. 263]; 2 — Sudan, ca 4000 BC [835, p. 269]; 3, 4 — Southeastern Europe, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 124]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, c. 524].

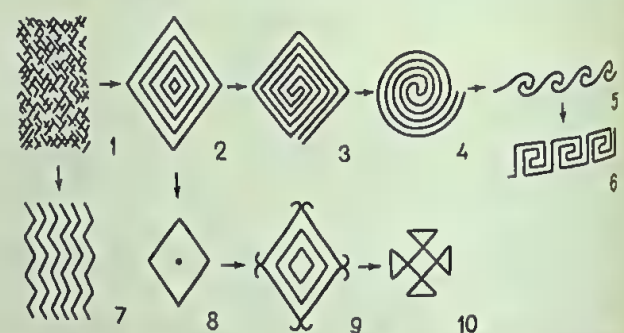


Fig. 246. Origin of various ornamental motifs: 1, 2, 7 — according to V. Bibikova [64, p. 6]; 3-6, 8-10 — according to B. Rybakov [472, p. 131] (1 — pattern of dentine on section of mammoth ivory).

from generation to generation, from tribe to tribe, to some extent outlasted them. The Paleolithic meander is encountered again during the Neolithic. It accompanies animal images (Fig. 245: 1), probably because it retained its former significance of a magic sign expected to promote a successful hunt. The earliest farmers of Southeastern

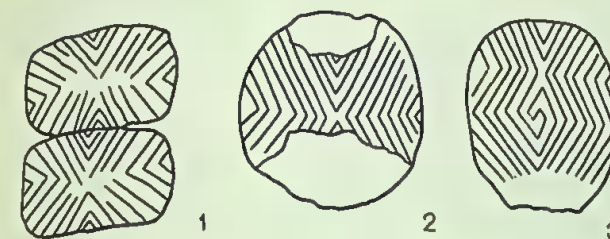


Fig. 247. Origin of rhomboid meander: 1 — B. Rybakov's hypothesis [472, p. 129]; 2, 3 — engraved designs on Paleolithic cult articles from Mezin, Ukraine [357, pl. 18, 19].

Europe, following the tradition of the Paleolithic hunters, drew the meander on female statuettes (Fig. 245: 3-5), although the goddess was now asked to favor agriculture rather than hunting. Perhaps as far back as the Paleolithic the goddess was not only mistress of animals (she still retained this function both in the Neolithic and during Classical Antiquity), but was generally the sovereign of the world, responsible for all fortunes and misfortunes, for all good and evil.

We have discussed V. Bibikova's theory that the zigzag (and rhomboid) ornament originated from the appearance of the mammoth ivory pattern in section (Fig. 246: 1, 2, 7), and shown that it is unfounded. Developing this hypothesis that the zigzag and rhomboid ornament of the Paleolithic period imitated the visible structure of mammoth ivory, B. Rybakov concluded that the pattern was the source for various ornamental motifs — meanders, spirals, cruciform shapes, etc. (Fig. 246: 3-10). This explanation of the origin of numerous ornamental designs, based on an apparent similarity of graphemes, treats the designs in question as the result of arbitrary exercises in graphic art. If this scheme is correct, ornamental elements do not convey any message, they are no more than decoration. However, this construction falls apart as soon as one applies logic to it. For example, the rhombic patterns from which all the others allegedly derived (Fig. 246: 2) have not been found in Mezin ornaments. The whole scheme therefore appears doubtful.

Still, let us assume that the artist who drew the Mezin meander was familiar with the rhombic design. Does that mean that the meander originated from the rhombus? To show that this was the case, B. Rybakov offers the following reasoning: a special stamp of four chevrons meeting at the apex was used for making rhombic ornamental designs; if adjacent impressions were placed in line, this produced rhombic designs; if they occurred with a shift, a meander resulted (Fig. 247: 1).

But this hypothesis is vulnerable. First of all, why make a stamp of angular lines arranged crosswise in order to draw a rhombus? Wouldn't it be simpler to stamp whole rhombic impressions?

Second, the method of displacing adjacent impressions seems doubtful. In order to produce a meander, one must be sure that the lines coincide accurately. This cannot be achieved by stamping, because it is impossible to see the exact position of the impression made when the stamp is applied. Moreover, if the meander was the result of chance displacement of the stamp, this could not have been foreseen, and the stamp to produce such a result



Fig. 248. Developments of surfaces of Mezin cult figurines [357, pls. 15, 16].

could not have been devised beforehand; if it was planned, the meander existed prior to the stamp.

Third, quadrangular stamps with such a pattern (Fig. 247: 1) were indeed made, but since the Neolithic (Anatolia, Hungary [782b, Table 183]), for stamping impressions on bread. They were preceded by Paleolithic designs of this kind on round surfaces (Fig. 247: 2), but in this case the abutting of adjacent impressions could not have produced a meander. Neither could the meander have resulted from edge-to-edge quadrangular stamps during the Neolithic, because it had already existed earlier, during the Paleolithic (Fig. 247: 3).

Fourth, the Paleolithic artifact (Fig. 247: 2), bearing a pattern preceding that on the Neolithic stamp (Fig. 247: 1), is by no means a stamp. The engraving occupies a space measuring only 3.5 cm in diameter. The design is fine, produced by thin incised, rather than convex, lines. If this object is used as a stamp, no impression will result. That it cannot be a stamp is also indicated by its conical shape, unsuitable for holding with the fingers. Besides, the carved pattern covers not only the flat surface, but also the conical portion. What for, if it is a stamp?

This object's function can be judged by comparing it with other Mezin finds [603, pp. 232-234]. It is a variant in the series of figurines, which, though differing in shape, resemble one another in a general way [357, Tables 11-19]. The archeologist I. Shovkoplyas has proved that these figurines were stylized female images [603, pp. 220-236]. He also suggests that elements of their ornamentation were "conventional and schematic linear representations of parts of the female figure" [603, p. 221].

It was shown in the chapter "Polysemantic Triangle" that the chevron pattern on the Mezin figurines (Fig. 147: 3-5) was a conventional designation of female breasts. Almost indispensable among the designs on these figurines is a triangular sign (Fig. 248: 2); it is a representation of the female reproductive organ (cf. Fig. 147: 5). Other figurines bear a sign in the form of a shaded pentagon instead of a triangle (Fig. 248: 1). This appears on the belly of a female statuette from Mezin (see Fig. 147: 4); consequently, the meaning of this sign may be the same as that of the triangle.

The Mezin figurines show not only female sex signs, but also ornaments symbolizing a successful hunt: the zigzag (animal track) and the meander (a trap for catching the animal). The entire complex of Mezin images, including the shape of the figurines, bears witness that these objects were of a ritual nature, and were intended for magic rites associated with the belief that the goddess, the mistress of animals (and probably also of human destinies), could predetermine the outcome of a hunt.

LABYRINTH AND BABYLON

Unlike the swastika with all ends bent in the same direction forming a four-line spiral (Fig. 225), the sign of the labyrinth is formed by reciprocal spiral swirls of the cross ends. This can produce two mirror image variants; both are known in Daghestan (Fig. 249).

Nearly all Daghestan labyrinths of this type (we will refer to it as "classical") are confined to several settlements in Avaria, a western highland in the region where one usually

encounters swastikas, spiraled swastikas, and other archaic graphemes engraved on the stones of buildings. Certain skills are required for producing such a complex figure, so no wonder that some labyrinths are not properly shaped (Fig. 250).

Alongside labyrinths with a cross at the center are labyrinths with the central portion containing a rosette or disk (Fig. 251). In Daghestan, labyrinths with a circle



Fig. 249. Classical labyrinth in Daghestan: 1 — carved stone of a wall, Khindakh; 2 — analogous one is in Urada of the district; 2 — wooden salt cellar from Avaria region [358, p. 31]; an analogous one is on a wall of a structure in Tidib.



Fig. 250. Incomplete labyrinths in Daghestan: 1 — Kurakh; 2 — Irib [141, p. 107]; 3, 4 — Richa and Demurkil [564, p. 152].

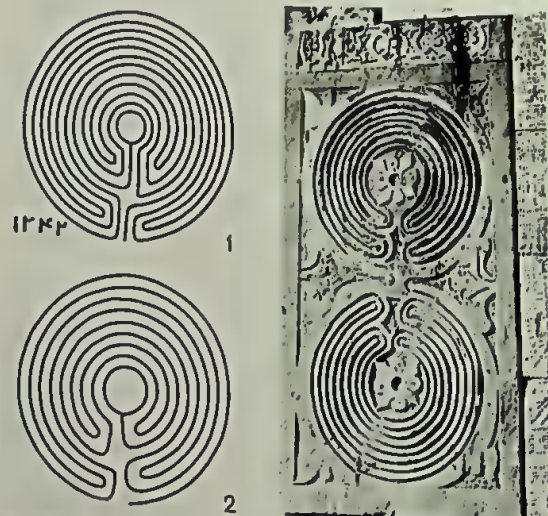


Fig. 251. Daghestan labyrinths with central rosette or disk: 1 — mosque in Urtil [301, p. 83]; 2 — Rughelda; 3 — mosque in Gumi.

Fig. 252. Horseshoe-shaped labyrinth in Daghestan: 1 — rock wall engraving near Kapchugai [328, p. 149]; 2 — Tidib [598, p. 78]; 3 — mosque in Khuryuk [55, pl. 11]; 4 — grave stela in Khustil [301, p. 94].

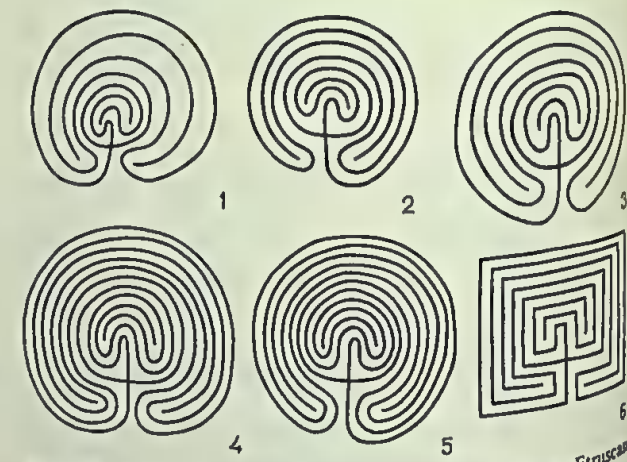


Fig. 253. Classical labyrinths in Europe: 1 — design on Etruscan vessel, ca 700 BC; 2 — design on Cretan coin, ca 100 BC [738, p. 16]; 3 — stone laying, England [274, p. 41]; 4 — stone laying in Gottland Island, Sweden [738, p. 14]; 5 — stone laying, Finland [274, p. 41]; 6 — ancient Greek design, ca 1200 BC [618e, pl. 46].

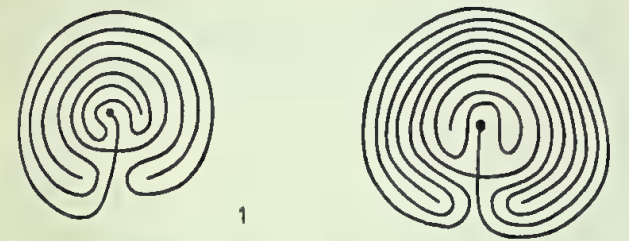


Fig. 254. Incomplete labyrinths: 1 — pattern on a carved stone, North Ossetia; 2 — stone laying, Finland [393, p. 136].



Fig. 255. Northern labyrinths: 1 — labyrinth in Solovki Island (White Sea) [91, pl. 1] (a mirror image exists in Finland [92, pl. 6]); 2 — stone laying, Solovki Island [92, pl. 1]; 3 — turf laying, Germany [272, p. 41]; 4 — design from Northern Russia [274, p. 41].

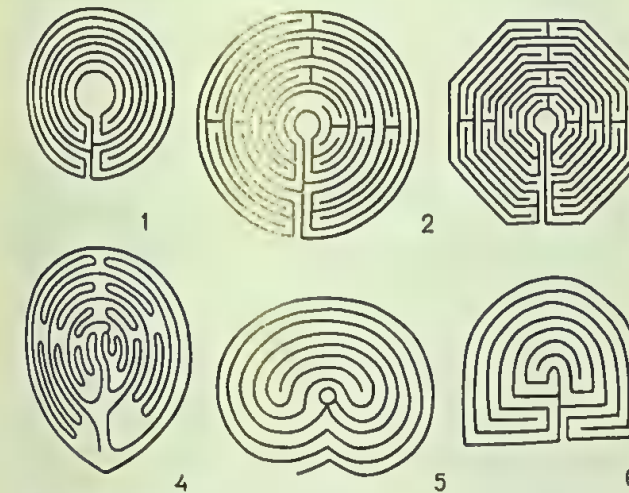


Fig. 256. Western European labyrinths: 1 — illuminated manuscript, 9th c. [208a, p. 103]; 2 — turf laying, England [208a, p. 107]; 3, 4 — patterns on cathedral floors, France, 14th c. [808, p. 196; 761, p. 64]; 5, 6 — turf layings, England [761, p. 87; 38, p. 134].

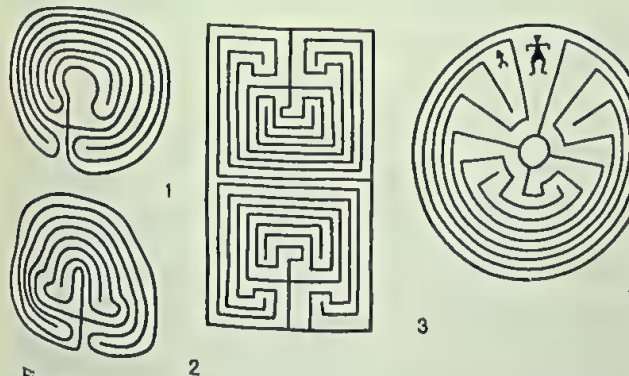


Fig. 257. American labyrinths: 1-4 — figures made by North American Indians [651, pp. 129, 131].

or a rosette at the center are generally found in Tabasaran, an area characterized by archaic forms of architecture and monumental decorative art; certain specific graphemes are also encountered in this region (Figs. 51: 1; 54: 1, 2).

A great number of Daghestan labyrinths are formed by spiral-loop lines, without a symbolic sign inside (Fig. 252).

Though labyrinths are quite common in Daghestan, there are none in the rest of the Caucasus, with the exception of a single incomplete labyrinth in North Ossetia (Fig. 254: 1).¹⁸⁸

Generally speaking, outside Daghestan labyrinth diagrams have been found only in Europe (and in America). European finds include all the varieties of the pattern. The two mirror image variants of the classical labyrinth with a cross at the center are known (Fig. 253), including those with incomplete lines (Fig. 254). In Northeastern Europe, near the Baltic and White Seas, labyrinths are generally horseshoe-shaped (Fig. 255), whereas in Northwestern Europe (England, France) they are mainly circular, with a small space at the center (Fig. 256: 1-3). The classical type of labyrinth with a cross is also encountered in the North.

Labyrinths are common only in some parts of Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and the north of the continent. There are southern labyrinths in the form of designs only, while the northern ones are made of stones or pieces of turf laid on the surface of the ground. Labyrinth representations occur in medieval Western European manuscripts and in the floor mosaics of medieval churches, mainly in France.

The oldest known classical labyrinths with a cross inside, dating from the second and first half of the first millennia B.C., were found in Italy and Greece (Figs. 253: 1, 6; 260: 4). These are already completely formed. The oldest labyrinths of the White Sea region date from the first millennium B.C. [545, p. 74].

Under what circumstances these whimsical designs came into being and how they became separated by such great distances, remains an enigma. The opinion that labyrinths were devised in different places independently, as a result of convergent development [284, p. 77], cannot be accepted. It is improbable that this extremely intricate design, which is even difficult to copy, would emerge again and again (in the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Daghestan, and pre-Columbian America). As to the causes of its dispersion, they cannot be accounted for by any random factor. Suppose a labyrinth design decorating some object could reach the Northern Caucasus by way of intertribal exchange, as was the case with Egyptian scarabs. However, the labyrinth was venerated by local inhabitants as a sacred symbol,¹⁸⁹ which would not have happened had someone decided to copy the pattern from, say, a Knossos coin.

Equally untenable is the opinion that American Indians could have assimilated the grapheme from the Spaniards or from Franciscan monks [702, p. 66; 714, p. 128]. The Indians depicted the labyrinth on the walls of their buildings, on cliffs, in embroidery, on cult objects [651]; hence it is clear

¹⁸⁸ An Ossetian fairy tale tells how a cord was used in finding one's way among intricate paths. This suggests the Greek legend of the labyrinth from which Theseus escaped thanks to Ariadne's thread.

¹⁸⁹ The labyrinth was represented on grave stelae in Daghestan and in Denmark [761, p. 151].

that they attached great significance to the design. They were familiar with various types of labyrinths represented in Old World artifacts: classical (Fig. 257: 1, 2), square in Old World artifacts: classical (Fig. 257: 1, 2), square (Fig. 257: 3, cf. Fig. 253: 6), double (cf. Fig. 255: 4), and with a disk at the center (Fig. 257: 4). Most of these types could not have been known to the Catholic priests from whom the aborigines allegedly learned the labyrinth design. Besides, the Indians had their own original versions of the symbol (Fig. 257: 4). The labyrinth is one of the ancient Western Asian and European symbols known in the New World prior to the European conquest at the end of the fifteenth century.

In Daghestan the labyrinth is called the "Khyber Fortress." This is the name of the fortress captured by 'Ali; however, the labyrinth sign, even in its latest, classical form, is at least two thousand years older than this event. The labyrinth designs common in Daghestan, originally had nothing to do with Islam. As with crosses in Christianity or swastikas in Nazi Germany, they are ancient pagan symbols.

H. Sicard suggested that the labyrinth expressed the idea of the sequence "life—death—life" [835, p. 261]; W. Knight thought that the labyrinth was a symbolic expression of the idea of mankind's progress towards the truth [731, p. 449]; James Frazer believed, in line with "solar mythology," that cult practices associated with the labyrinth in ancient times represented the movement of the sun across the sky. Such opinions may be listed infinitely; they are arbitrary, do not necessarily follow logically from facts, and do not contribute to authentic knowledge.

J. Heller maintained, in the spirit of interpreting the genesis of ancient graphemes as a product of liberal exercises in graphic art, that the labyrinth design is a meaningless ornamental pattern and that it was invented by artists who "experimented with meanders and swastikas" [713, pp. 58, 59]. He claimed that the design produced in this way gave rise to related legends and games. In his opinion, the popular games commonly played near labyrinths in Northern Europe, were borrowed from the Romans who, in their turn, invented them for sport [714, pp. 126, 137]. But how did these games come to be common in Northern Europe, where no Roman foot ever trod?

In Northern European labyrinths built from stones or turf, certain ritual games took place and ritual dances were performed. Some ritual practices were performed at Northern Russian labyrinths, to judge by some of their local names, such as "maiden dances" or "St. Peter's game" [92, p. 121]. The ancient Romans also had rites associated with the labyrinth, like marching in processions, dancing, walking through mazes, and horse riding [761, p. 158]. The procedures of some religious festivals in Ancient Greece were associated with the labyrinth [738, p. 16]. According to Virgil, Roman games held near labyrinths included horse riding. A related scene was recorded by the Etruscans (Fig. 268: 1).

If one follows some scholars' reasoning, the Etruscans were fascinated by Homer to such an extent that they started staging his epic, and these performances so strongly appealed to the artistic taste of the Romans that they assimilated them from the Etruscans. For some reason these games were given on a certain day of the year, and Roman

emperors took such diversions most seriously [731, pp. 445, 448]. Furthermore, these games were so much appreciated by other nations of Europe, even up to the White Sea, that they, too, assimilated them from the Romans and cultivated them for two thousand years, and Homer's epic made such an impression on the ancient inhabitants of various countries in Europe that they recorded the name *Troy* in their toponymies [731, p. 454].

Something of the meaning of the labyrinth can be understood from its appellations. The ancient Greeks referred to it as *labyrinthos* and associated its origin with Crete. The double-sided axe typical of the ancient Cretan cult was called *labris* by the Greeks. These words not only sound alike, but are related. H. Güntert in his study of their etymology [706] shows that they originated from a pre-Indo-European Eastern Mediterranean word which meant 'stone.' The labyrinth, in Güntert's opinion, is a stone structure; in Byzantium, a monastery surrounded with a wall was called *labra*.

The point is not that ancient labyrinths were built of stone. There are no such stone labyrinths in the Mediterranean region (the only testimony is Herodotus' communication about a building with elaborate planning and passageways, constructed in Ancient Egypt in the third millennium B.C.). The famous Cretan labyrinth of the Greek legend has never been found; it apparently never existed; in any case it was not a stone structure. But stone was the underworld god's symbol; besides, the word *labra* had the additional meaning of 'grave.'¹⁹⁰

In understanding the meaning of the labyrinth, its other name, *troy*, is also significant. Wherever there are labyrinths in Western Europe, people refer to them by this word. An Etruscan representation of the labyrinth bears the inscription *truya* (Fig. 268: 1). Virgil reports that Romans called games held near the labyrinth *troy* [761, p. 158]. There is a folk dance called *troyanka* in Serbia. All this can hardly be due to the ancient and medieval European population's knowledge of the Iliad.

Ernst Krause in his monograph on labyrinths compares the name *Troya* to that of the Slavic deity *Troyan*.¹⁹¹ He expresses the opinion that *Troyan* is the demon of the underworld and the labyrinth/*troy* is his fortress [739, p. 223]. In Slavic fairy tales *Troyan* is an adversary of the sun, has three heads and wings, and is, therefore, a three-headed serpent. Corresponding to the Slavic *Troyan* is the three-headed *Draogha* or *Druya* of the Persians (note the similarity of Persian *druya* and Etruscan *truya*). Krause believed that the words *Troyan* and *dragon* are variant names for the same mythical creature [730, pp. 218, 177].

It is possible that the English word *maze* is etymologically connected with *m.s* which is the root of numerous terms pertaining to the image of the Neolithic underworld god (this root-word will be discussed later in this book).

The labyrinth of the Greek myth is the dwelling place of the Minotaur, half-man and half-bull, i.e., the earth god. Minos demanded human sacrifices from the Athenians once every nine years to satisfy the Minotaur (the number

¹⁹⁰ The word could have been formed on the basis of the scheme 7+3 .
¹⁹¹ Twenty-five years later this comparison was quoted by W. Matthews, who failed to refer to E. Krause [761, p. 162].

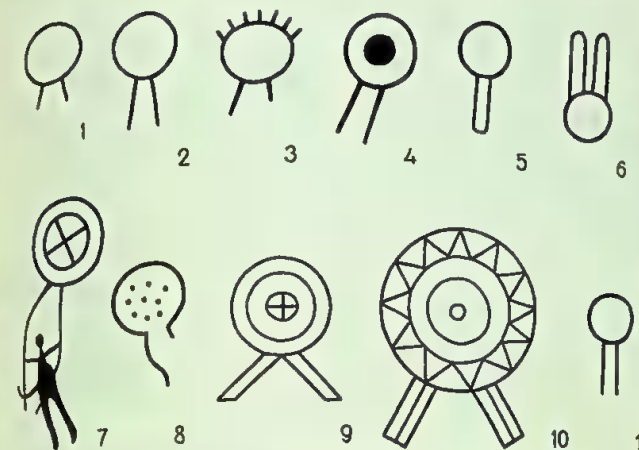


Fig. 258. Sign with two appendages: 1—5, 7—8 — rock wall designs, Bronze Age, in Daghestan (near the settlement of Chinahita), mountains of Kirghizia [184, pl. 9], Urals [549, p. 171], Karelia [443, pl. 20], Sweden [628, p. 152], and Spain [627, pl. 11]; 9, 10 — designs on early Christian tombstones in Asia Minor [805, pp. 270, 280]; 6, 11 — sacred signs in Ancient Egypt.

nine is associated with the underworld). The ancient Egyptian structure the Greeks called labyrinth, which served as a funerary temple and a place for burying important personages and sacred animals, was a large, partly underground structure, square in plan, with two main crossing corridors [761, p. 15] (the intersection is a Neolithic symbol of earth, including the underworld, where the deceased go). Some labyrinth-like graphemes employ the cross or the swastika, signs of the earth god. Such a combination can be seen among labyrinth-like designs from Crete, India, and the Northern Caucasus (Fig. 263: 5, 12-14); it is therefore not accidental. Paleolithic monuments feature a combination of a labyrinth-like element with the spiral, a symbol of the serpent (Fig. 263: 16). According to Irish and English legends, fairies danced in the moonlight in the spirals of maze structures (the moon is a manifestation of the underworld god; the fairy is a late survival of the image of the underworld god's spouse). It was believed in Sweden that these structures marked entrances to the underworld.

Numerous data indicate that the mythical labyrinth was regarded as a fortress or dwelling place. The Daghestanian name for labyrinth, "Khyber Fortress," was mentioned above. In Ossetia, the labyrinth was called "Syrdon's house"; another personage of the Ossetian epic, Soslan, lives in an underground labyrinth. One of the English terms for turf labyrinths is *bower* [761, p. 173], which means 'dwelling.' Ancient Romans considered the labyrinth a fortress [818, p. 142]. The Egyptian hieroglyph for 'house' (Fig. 263: 11) does not resemble a house but rather a labyrinth. American Indians call the labyrinth "the house of Tkuu" [702, pp. 65, 66] — a mythical personage who led people out of the underworld [761, p. 154].

There is also other evidence that may help to elucidate the meaning and origin of the labyrinth design.

Labyrinths have round or oval outlines (isolated square and polygonal varieties are derivatives) and an "entrance" on one side. This may be compared to a grapheme of a simpler form. In different parts of Eurasia, from the Atlantic coast to the Urals and Pamirs, as well as in Daghestan, a sign in the form of a circle with two appen-

dages can be seen (Fig. 258: 1, 2). This sign has also been found in several rock wall paintings in the region of Lake Onega in Karelia. As for its semantics in the Onega complex, opinions differ widely.

V. Ravdonikas, a student of Karelian petroglyphs, thought the sign was an image of the celestial luminary; he referred to the fact that there is a sun with two rays among Egyptian hieroglyphs [444, p. 12]. Others maintained that the design represented a hunter's trap. The latter hypothesis was substantially shaken by strong argumentation showing that the utilitarian approach is untenable in deciphering cult symbols of the Onega Lake region [290]. Supporters of the "trap" theory tend to overlook facts which do not agree with their interpretation (for instance, that this rather strange representation of the "trap" is common over an immense territory, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals, from Karelia to Egypt). However, adherents of the cult meaning of the Onega petroglyphs have also not offered a convincing explanation of the sign.

If the circle with two appendages is a sign of the sun with two rays, why in some cases do they form a loop (Fig. 258: 5)? Why do these rays come in twos and threes (Fig. 305: 4)? Why are long rays combined with several short ones (Fig. 258: 3)? Besides, why is the sun shown so strangely, with two rays? If the two rays represent devices for carrying the emblem (Fig. 258: 7), why in other cases are the two rays part of the emblem, which then has a special carrying staff (Fig. 165: 6)? If the two appendages designate sun rays, how can we understand the design in Figure 258: 8 where the "rays" are sinuous?

The sign with two extensions designated the sun not only in Ancient Egypt. A Sumerian hieroglyph deriving from such a grapheme (Fig. 57: 7) had the same meaning [509, p. 277]. Consequently, this symbol had solar meaning in

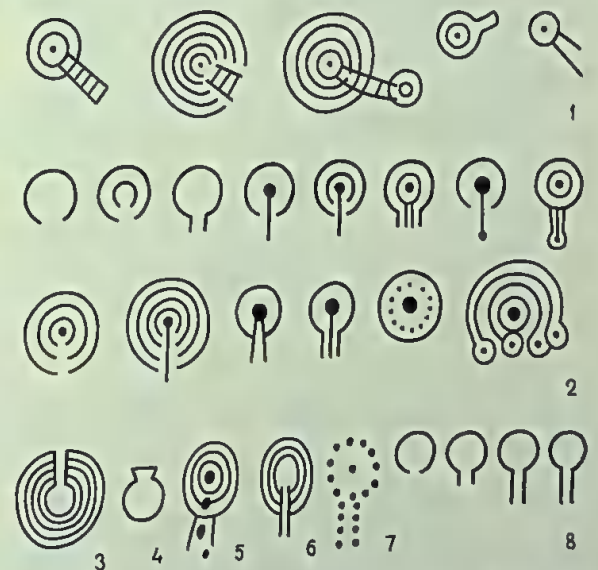


Fig. 259. Symbolic representations of heaven with entrance: 1 — signs engraved on stones, England, ca 1800 BC [659a, p. 617]; 2 — designs engraved on rocks, Scotland, ca 1500 BC [776]; 3 — woman's adornment, on rocks, Scotland, ca 1500 BC [776]; 4 — Ancient Egypt, sign of heaven goddess Nut; 5, 6 — rock wall paintings in Sweden and of heaven goddess Nut; 7 — plan of a cromlech in Sweden Portugal [616, p. 89; 861, p. 132]; 8 — plans of tombs ca 3000 BC in Western Europe [861, p. 8].

the Near East ■ far back as the third millennium B.C. But why the sun had two rays remains unclear. An explanation must be sought in Neolithic symbolism.

Let us look at two sets of petroglyphs from the British Isles (Fig. 259: 1, 2). One is from the third millennium B.C. (the Neolithic), the other from the beginning of the second millennium (the Early Bronze Age). Nevertheless, they most certainly reflect the same religious tradition. This is not unusual, because the wave of Indo-Europeanization had only just reached the western edge of Europe at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.; besides, it incorporated a considerable admixture of the Neolithic ingredient (those who reached the Atlantic coast were not the people who had left the steppes of the Black Sea region, but their progenies mixed with the indigenous populations of Western Europe).

That Neolithic beliefs remained in force in the extreme west of Europe during the Early Bronze Age is confirmed, among other factors, by the continued flourishing of the Megalithic culture which emerged on the Iberian Peninsula in the fourth millennium B.C. Cromlechs were still constructed and menhirs were erected, and the tradition of collective interments accompanied by female images was maintained.

There is every reason to believe that the symbols presented in Figure 259 are connected with pre-Indo-European religious beliefs. Besides, the morphological affinity of these signs indicates that all of them expressed the same idea (or its versions).

The diagram of concentric circles or a disk, ■ shown, is the Neolithic heaven sign. It seems that the break is ■ conventional designation of the entrance to heaven, and the appendages, usually two lines, designate a passageway leading to heaven. Quite frequently ■ line passes through this break or corridor from a point at the center of the disk. Sometimes another, smaller disk is adjacent to the outer end of the corridor issuing from the center of the disk, i.e., of the sky.

Let us look ■ other features of the signs in Figure 259: 2. According to the author who published them, they were made on rocks near the sea shore, before ■ wide vista, southwards and very frequently seawards. These petroglyphs nearly always appear on the horizontal or slightly sloping portion of ■ rock (like the Onega petroglyphs which also occur near the shore of the visually boundless lake). The "tail" issuing from the disk is directed downwards in 90% of all cases.

On the basis of the above one may perhaps conclude that the designs in question designate heaven with an entrance or exit. What entered or went out must be what people saw in the sky or believed to be there. Birds? Their movement in the sky has no definite direction. Stars? Myths offer no evidence about stars migrating; nothing is known of a star cult in ancient Western Europe. The moon? Its rise and setting are rarely noted and are not so impressive a natural phenomenon as to become a leading theme of ritual. The sun? More likely, especially since the British petroglyphs in question occupy the sunlit southern side of the cliffs.

The line issuing from the disk representing heaven continues down the slope. The cult therefore focuses on sunset

rather than sunrise. The emphasis in the legend of the stag who carried the sun is also on sunset rather than sunrise.

It can be understood why the entrance would be shown as a corridor. The disk portrays not only the sky, but also the world of the dead located in heaven, and ■ round tomb — tholos, while the entrance to heaven resembles the entrance to ■ tomb, the dromos/corridor. Tholoses with the dromos, widely known from monuments of the Aegean culture and assimilated in the Eastern Mediterranean in about 1600 B.C., were erected in the west of Europe as early as the third millennium B.C. (Fig. 259: 8).

While the diagrams in the form of ■ circle with ■ break or two extensions, or with ■ "handle," resemble the plan of a tholos, the sign of several concentric circles resembles the plan of ■ cromlech.

It was suggested in the chapter "Rain and Heaven" that cromlechs may be considered reproductions of the pattern of concentric circles, symbolizing heaven and the world of the dead (burials are sometimes found within them [381a, p. 260]). Alleys of parallel sequences of stones lead to some of the cromlechs, which also brings them closer to the graphemes being analyzed (Fig. 259: 7). Some cromlechs have entrances on the eastern and western sides [355, p. 20]; they represent heaven with the entrance and exit, to let the sun in and out. Roman sources point out that the heaven temple must have one entrance and that this rule also holds when the temple is not a structure, but an open space, even without ■ fence [818, p. 48].

Ancient burials often contain bronze mirrors, round in shape and with a handle. Why was the mirror, of all everyday objects, accorded the privilege of accompanying the deceased to the world of the dead? There can be no doubt that the mirror had ■ cult significance. The ethnographer A. Khazanov believes that the function of the mirror ■ a sacred object was associated with the concept in accordance with which man's reflection is his soul, or that the mirror's gloss emulated the sun [559, p. 96]. However, the mirror served as an attribute of the mother goddess and figured as an accessory in funerary and wedding rites [559, p. 93]. Properly speaking, why should one hold that the round mirror with ■ handle is ■ solar symbol? As was shown in numerous examples, the round shape is not necessarily an argument, particularly since these so-called mirrors may be oval, as well as round (Fig. 292: 13). Because of the glossiness? But ceramic objects of similar shape were found in burials on the Cyclades Islands (Fig. 260: 3), and in Asia Minor they have the form of a bronze grate (Fig. 260: 5). Some of them have a double "handle," the shape obviously representing ■ heaven symbol with a dromos. On the circular perimeter of the Cyclades objects there are teeth turned inward, a typical detail of some symbolic heaven representations (cf. Fig. 36). The "grate" is also a heaven symbol element (Figs. 24: 11; 71: 1). In Ancient Israel, women wore adornments in the form of shining round metal plates with wooden frames and an appendage, resembling "table tennis rackets," as archeologists put it. In the chapter "The Sun" we suggested that the so-called mirror is a bronze emblem representing a disk (heaven sign) on ■ pole. All these graphic and material symbols (the disk with a stroke, the disk with two strokes, the ceramic "pan," the grate with a handle, the plate in the

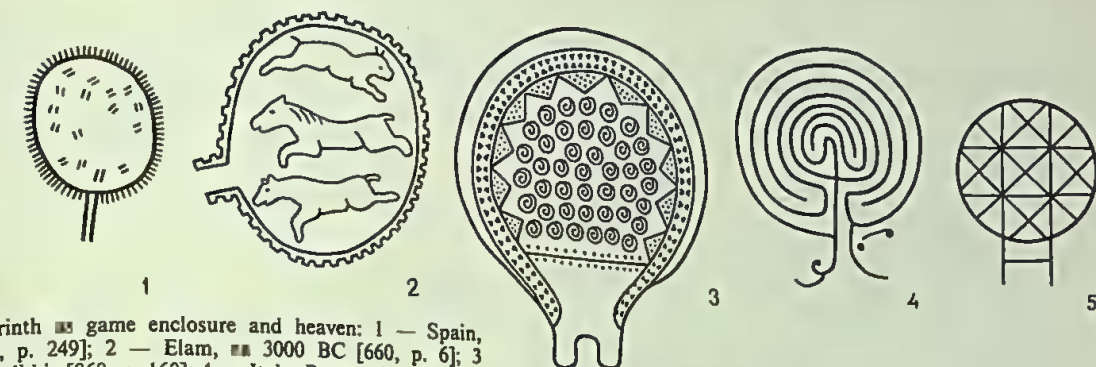


Fig. 260. Labyrinth ■ game enclosure and heaven: 1 — Spain, Mesolithic [789, p. 249]; 2 — Elam, ■ 3000 BC [660, p. 6]; 3 — Cyclades, Neolithic [868, p. 160]; 4 — Italy, Bronze Age [619, p. 226]; 5 — Asia Minor, Bronze Age [782c, pl. 309].

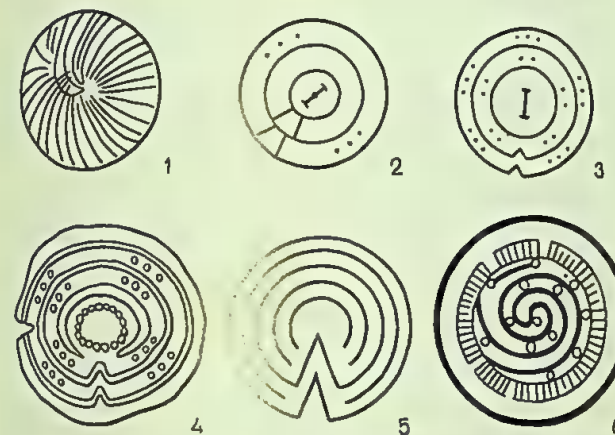


Fig. 261. Heaven with entrance: 1 — highland Georgia [51, pl. 4]; 2, 3 — Spain, Bronze Age [804, pp. 297, 300]; 4 — Ireland, Bronze Age [658, p. 351]; 5 — Greece, ca 800 BC [618, p. 294]; 6 — Spain, ■ 500 CE [722, p. 2].

form of a racket) appeared long before metal mirrors. The mirror with a handle, its shape conditioned by practical needs, resembles ■ heaven sign (Figs. 40: 7; 23: 3), or ■ conventional designation of heaven with ■ entrance (Figs. 259: 8; 260: 1), or ■ disk on a stand. Possessing a shape similar to the sacred emblem, it acquired the same cult-symbolic meaning as the grapheme, i.e., it became a material symbol of heaven, of the heaven goddess, the Great Goddess.

The oval with rays on the circumference (Fig. 260: 1) is apparently ■ conventional representation of heaven and rain. The two lines attached to it would designate the dromos, the entrance to heaven. There is ■ type of labyrinth with abutting two lines designating the entrance (Fig. 260: 4). This shows that we are on the right track in our search for the relationship between the labyrinth and heaven. Note in this connection that one can see a variant of double heaven symbols in some double labyrinths (Figs. 251: 3; 255: 4; 257: 3).

Ancient artifacts in Western Europe sometimes carry graphemes in the form of concentric circles interrupted on one side (Fig. 261: 2-5). This is also heaven with an entrance. Dots not infrequently occur inside such designs. During the Neolithic, we recall, dots along the perimeter or inside a circle ■ designated an area under crops to be irrigated by heavenly water. In the present case, however, the dots are arranged in a specific manner: they are assembled in

groups between the circle lines. These are apparently not seed as imagined by the Neolithic farmer, but stars in the sky as they appeared to Bronze-Age man. The dots form clusters which would be conventional representations of constellations.

While reconstructing the meaning of the labyrinth ■ ■ heaven symbol, we must note that ■ small circle ■ the center of the labyrinths decorating the floors of medieval French cathedrals (Fig. 256: 3) was called "heaven" [651, p. 131]. The image in Figure 261: 6 presents another enigma. In all likelihood, this is also ■ conventional representation of heaven. However, the lines inside the disk are not concentric, they are spiraled, and the dots/stars do not move in a smooth orderly circle but rush about within meandering passageways.

Patterns of entangled meandering passageways appear on artifacts from Europe and in the art of Australian aborigines (Fig. 262). V. Kabo, writing on Australian maze designs, presumes that the drawing resembling intricate passageways expressed ■ concept of the world of the dead as ■ mysterious country of blind alleys [223, p. 257]. This interpretation of such graphemes is supported by the circumstances under which the carved stone shown in Figure 262: 1 was found. It lay on ■ floor colored red (the color symbolizing the underworld), and this area was surrounded by ■ wall spiral in plan (the spiral, a sign of the serpent, is a symbol of the underworld god; the spiraling wall may also be understood as an image of the trap or as representing the abode of the lord of the underworld, cf. Figures 244: 2 and 263: 11).



Fig. 262. Intricate passages: 1 — England, ca 3000 BC [731, p. 445]; 2 — Australia [223, pl. 11].

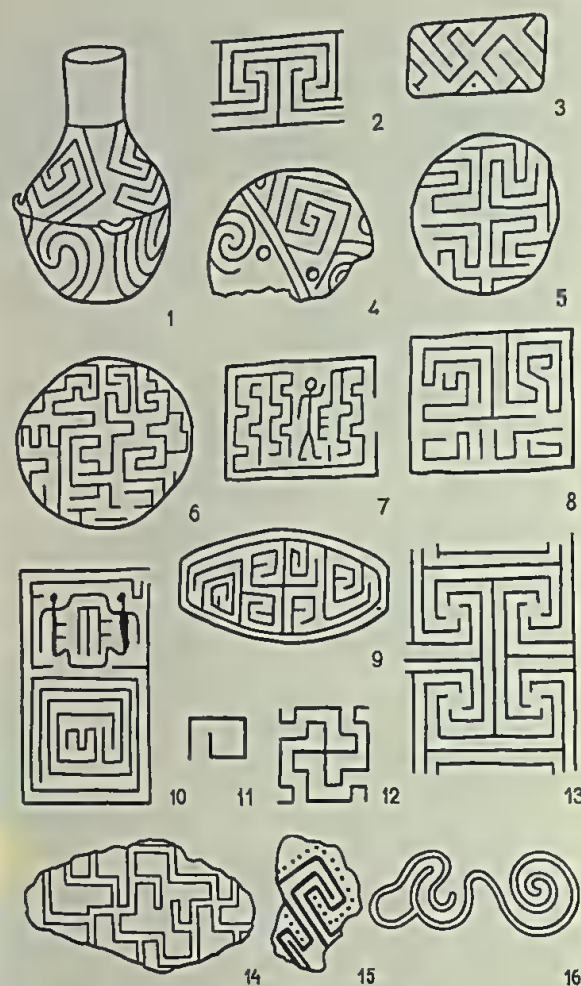


Fig. 263. Meandroid intricate passages: 1 — Central Europe, ca 3000 BC [732, p. 57]; 2 — Ancient Greece; 3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 469]; 4 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 127]; 5, 6 — Ancient Crete [676a, p. 359]; 7–11 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [660, pp. 7, 8; 761, p. 41]; 12 — Ancient India [756, p. 45]; 13 — Ancient Crete [761, p. 32]; 14 — Ingushetia, Bronze Age [332, p. 84]; 15 — Northern Caspian Sea region, Neolithic [348, p. 115]; 16 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 95].

The souls of the dead are unable to escape from the intricate passages, like game caught in a trap, and cannot find the way out (Fig. 245: 2). European and Western Asian drawings of intricate passageways, dating from the Neolithic (Fig. 263: 1–4), are descended from Paleolithic interpenetrating lines. The latter resemble the image of the serpent, lord of the underworld (Fig. 263: 16), and at the same time they correlate with the Paleolithic meander which designated the hunter's trap (Fig. 243: 2). These labyrinth-like passageways no longer represent a trap for snaring game, but a place one cannot escape from.

Circular mazes with an entrance on one side (Fig. 264) suggest that this place is heaven, and at the same time the domain of the dead. This must also be the meaning of Northern European labyrinths built of stones or turf; they differ from cromlechs in that their internal passageways are not concentric, but rather loop-like. A connection between the notions of heaven and of a hunter's snare can also be seen in the graphemes shown in Figure 260: 5 (the sky, also a net) and in Figure 260: 1 (the oval with rays and

two shoots is a heaven symbol, but it contains animal tracks, as in representations of enclosures for catching game, see Fig. 237: 3). The connection is more obvious in Figure 260: 2: the oval with two shoots is a heaven symbol, but the animals inside it suggest that it is also a game enclosure. The salient contour of this oval is characteristic of the ground plan of Persian and Mesopotamian fortification walls with alternating saliences and recessions. Therefore, this design shows not only heaven and at the same time a snare, but also a fortress. Note that the labyrinth, too, was regarded as a fortress.

Thus a semantic contact was formed in the Neolithic between the concepts of the other world as a land of blind alleys, of heaven, and of traps. This led to matching graphic images of heaven (in the form of concentric circles), traps (which resembled meanders), and blind alleys (which were conventionally designated by intricate interpenetrating lines). As a result, designs of circular outlines and interpenetrating meandering lines appeared (Fig. 264).

A certain role in this process could have been played by the graphic device of transforming concentric lines into spiral ones (Fig. 48: 2). The changed semantics of the concentric circles which once formed the heaven symbol was probably decisive in the transformation of the grapheme. These circles, previously concentric arcs (Figs. 9–13), originally represented cloud shapes. When the cloud sign was later transformed into a heaven symbol, their original meaning was lost. Thousands of years later it was completely forgotten. The concentric circles of the design which designated heaven became an image of passageways in the other world. Inasmuch as these passageways were imagined as blind alleys, they grew tangled instead of circular. This process was fostered by the availability of the graphic motifs of meander and intricate passageways, suited to embodying such an idea.

N. Vinogradov, who explored stone mazes on the Solovki Islands (in the White Sea), suggested that wickerwork fishing traps built in shallow waters were their prototype [92, p. 121]. This idea was further developed (without reference to Vinogradov) by N. Gurina [130, pp. 138–140], who published pictures of such fishing gear (Fig. 244: 2, 3). The conjecture sounds reasonable: the figurative art of remote antiquity provides support for it (Figs. 244: 1; 245: 1).

Many northern, as well as Western European and Daghestanian, mazes and labyrinth-like designs resemble this type of trap (Figs. 252: 1; 265: 6). Their shapes differ from more sophisticated labyrinth patterns, but have features in common with the idea they expressed. The oldest mazes consist of interpenetrating spirals (Fig. 264) or loop-like lines (Fig. 265: 3, 4, 6). Combinations of these two variants



Fig. 264. Spiral-shaped intricate passages: 1–3 — France, ca 3000 BC [757, pp. 337, 338]; 4 — Germany, ca 3000 BC [719, p. 295].

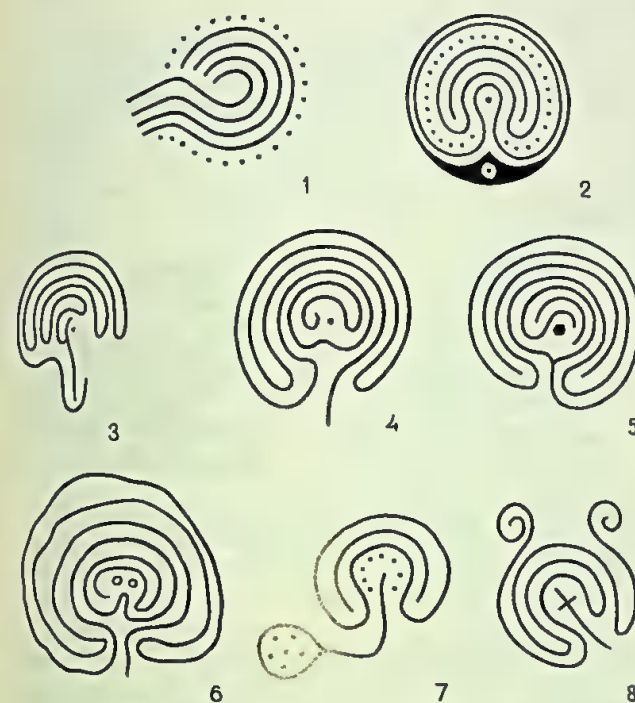


Fig. 265. Labyrinth prototypes: 1 — Austria, Aeneolithic [648, p. 300]; 2 — Mycenae [749, p. 42]; 3 — Ancient Peru [312, p. 57]; 4–7 — Germany, Spain, and Italy, Early Bronze Age [738, p. 46; 627, pl. 12; 620, p. 222; 627, pl. 11]; 8 — carved stone, Daghestan, Khindakh.

formed more intricate patterns (Fig. 265: 5).

Many of these figures have a dot inside. Comparison with the above designs from Great Britain (Fig. 259: 1, 2) makes it possible to conclude that the dots in the two groups have the same meaning. The preceding case suggested the conclusion that the dot designates the sun. This seems to apply also to labyrinth-like patterns. It is noteworthy that a dot appears inside some complete labyrinths as well (Fig. 254).

Figure 265: 1, 2 shows a Neolithic and an ancient Cretan pictures that apparently represent heaven, not in the form of closed concentric circles, but with a one-sided orientation signifying an entrance to heaven. These patterns are surrounded by dots which originally designated seed watered by heavenly moisture. It may be surmised from the above that the meaning of the dots had changed or was starting to change by that time. Other Western European designs, dating from the third to the beginning of the second millennia B.C., suggest the same idea.

The drawing shown in Figure 258: 8 may, after comparison with other designs, be considered a representation of heaven with an entrance. Designated inside the ring seems to be what is expected to issue from it. Inasmuch as this entire series of symbols expresses the idea of the sun leaving the sky, these dots must have signified the sun (sunshine). It seems that the dots changed their meaning of a field under crops to a solar symbolism before the Indo-Europeanization of Europe.¹⁹² Quite impressive in this connection is a rock painting from Spain shown in

¹⁹² The dots could have acquired different semantics (crops, tracks, light, etc.) without changes in the meaning of the symbol, i.e., simultaneously, in parallel. For example, Australian aborigines used the grapheme of dots in several meanings, as reported by ethnographers.

Figure 265: 7. This pictogram may mean: "The sun is leaving the sky for the underworld."

As sun veneration was established, the cross became a common solar symbol. It was therefore quite logical to place the cross, which designated the sun, in the center of the loop-like coils (Fig. 265: 8). A connection between this design, made in the 17th century Daghestan, and the Western European designs of the third and beginning of the second millennia B.C. noted above can be seen even from such a detail as an extended arm of the cross resembling the line that symbolized the departure of the sun from the sky in British rock wall paintings. Incidentally, this Daghestanian design is by no means unique: labyrinths in the form of a horseshoe figure with an inscribed cross were also quite common in England and Scandinavia [676, p. 125]. Another strong possibility, however, is that the cross in these cases symbolized the underworld god rather than the sun, and that such mazes expressed the idea of the beyond situated not in heaven, but in the underworld. However this may be, it is indisputable that mazes in combination with a cross (Fig. 263: 5) and the concepts expressed by these designs influenced the formation of circular labyrinths with a cross inside.

It only remained to place a symbol of the sun soaring in the sky (or of the underworld god), other than the cross — the swastika — in the middle of the loop pattern. Once this was done, the idea emerged to extend the ends of the swastika as spiral lines (Fig. 266A). It seems that spiraled swastikas are not simply the fruit of graphic exercises, but are definite symbols: of the sky with the sun in it. As a tendency existed towards matching the concepts of heaven and the other world, the spiral ends of the swastikas acquired the form of loop-like mutually penetrating lines. Variants of labyrinths with mirror image designs are therefore not accidental: they correspond to reciprocal "left" and "right" swastikas.

Neolithic graphemes originating from conventional representations of heaven, traps, and intricate passageways in fact express the same concept, that of the world of the dead. In the pre-Christian beliefs assimilated by Christianity, the other world was visualized as located above the sky or under the earth [86, p. 20]. Most probably both notions existed in the religious conceptions of the early farming period. But the weight of evidence indicates that

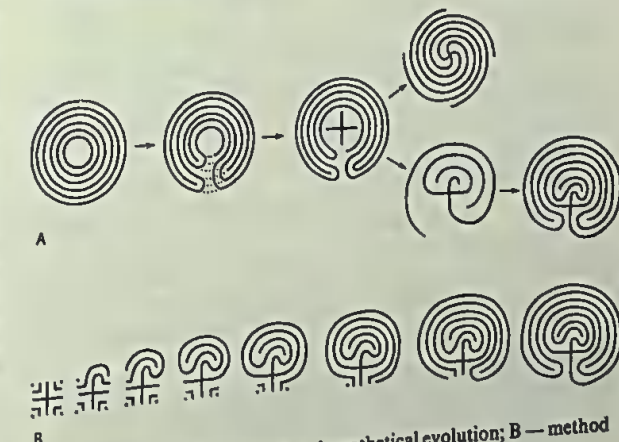


Fig. 266. Origin of labyrinth: A — hypothetical evolution; B — method of formation.

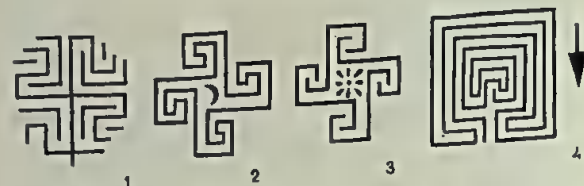


Fig. 267. Labyrinth-shaped figures with earth god symbol; 1-4 — Crete, 3000-1000 BC [660, pp. 9, 10].

the underworld god was the lord of the next world.

These ideas are the concealed meaning of the mazes combined with one of the earth god's symbols, the cross, the crescent, flower, or spear (Fig. 267). The designs are apparently a conventional representation of the earth god's abode, the labyrinth, including its classical variant, also represents this abode. But the labyrinth derives from the heaven symbol. Therefore the heaven sign, in the course of its evolution, acquired the meaning of the underworld symbol due to their common semantics as symbols of the other world.

In the system of Neolithic symbolism expressing the notions of the early farmers' religion the cross and the swastika were emblems of the underworld god. During the Bronze Age, when religious beliefs and the meaning of related symbols underwent a change, the signs became solar symbols. The cross and the swastika depicted in Neolithic labyrinths implied that the labyrinth was the abode of the underworld god. But since the Bronze Age such designs came to be understood as an expression of the idea that the sun spent time in the underworld.

Publications on labyrinths usually mention a design on an Etruscan vase showing riders emerging from a labyrinth (Fig. 268: 1). A carved stone from Daghestan bears a similar scene (Fig. 268: 3); it depicts a rider and a labyrinth with a cross next to it. Another Daghestanian labyrinth is shown with some sort of structure blocking the entrance (Fig. 268: 2). These designs revive memories of the myths associated with the labyrinth.

The Etruscan labyrinth bears the inscription "truya." Why is the labyrinth named after the legendary town?

There is a topic in Western European traditions of a hero, usually mounted, who enters a magic fortress with tangled passageways, defeats a monster, and liberates a woman. Games played near stone or turf labyrinths involved riders or a wooden horse [738, p. 31]. The labyrinths proper, as mentioned above, were called *troy*. This could not have been due to Homer's influence. Troy is the original appellation for the labyrinth and the mythical fortress it symbolized. It is in Homer's epic, the story about the siege of a town in Asia Minor was confused with the popular myth, so that the town, really called Ilium, came to be referred to as Troy.¹⁹³

In the chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers" we proposed a reconstruction of the Neolithic myth of the lord of the underworld who holds the sun, in the image

¹⁹³ On the site of the town considered to be Homer's Troy, a town called New Ilium (Ilium in Latin) was founded in the seventh century B.C. The word "new" seems to imply that the previous town was also called Ilium. J. Chadwick, a student of Aegean culture, is of the opinion that the war Homer sang of never happened [645, p. 185].



Fig. 268. Semantics of labyrinth: 1 — design on Etruscan vessel, ca 700 BC [298, p. 140]; 2 — Daghestan [376, p. 40]; 3 — carved stone, Daghestan, Go'or [141, p. 109].

of a woman, in captivity, and of his rival the stag, who endeavors to abduct the sun maiden. In the Bronze Age, the mythical deer was replaced by a horse, and the horse became a personification of the forces clashing with the forces of darkness. Besides, as the early Indo-European tribes venerated the horse and had a monopoly on riding, their struggle with the early farming tribes who worshiped the earth god, the lord of the underworld, was reflected in myths as a struggle between the rider and the serpent. And the episode of abduction of the sun by the stag was transformed into the liberation of a woman by a rider (or unmounted hero).

There are a variety of myths on the subject. In a Russian fairy tale a hero steals into a cave and releases a maiden from the power of the serpent. The story of Little Red Riding Hood tells about the wolf (an incarnation of the underworld god) who devoured the sun (its consistent epithet in Russian folklore is "the little red sun") and about the hunter (pursuer of the sun in the original myth) who released it. A Germanic variant of the legend about a maiden held in captivity by a dragon has it that she landed in an underground cave after eating a golden apple (gold and the apple are attributes of the underworld god). A Norse variant is about a maiden who found herself in a mountain cave (a usual dwelling place of the earth god).

E. Krause mentions a Greek myth which resembles Homer's tale about Troy: Hercules releasing Hesione from a monster who kept her in his fortress. A similar myth in the Edda tells about the liberation of Freya from the giant blacksmith. The blacksmith is an image of the underworld deity. He is a giant in the Edda, and stone labyrinths in Northern Europe are often called "giant's fence" or "giant's castle" [761, p. 150], from which it can be inferred that these stone structures were symbolic representations of the abode of the underworld deity.

A Northern European legend tells about Helena who was dragged to the underworld by a sea monster and released by Roland, who wrestled with a certain Troyano. Krause compared the Helena of this legend and Homer's Helen to

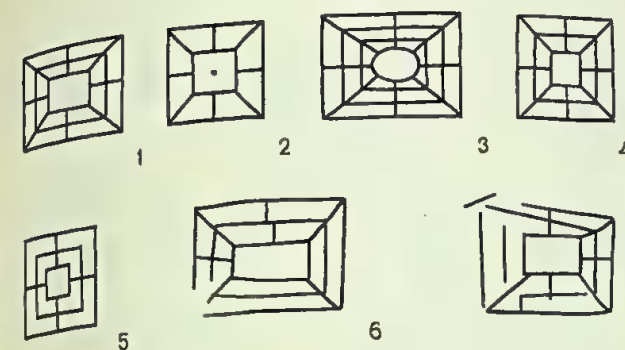


Fig. 269. Babylon sign in Daghestan: 1 — Kishtsha and Somoda; 2, 3 — Dusrakh; 4, 5 — Tidib [598, p. 77]; (5 — also in Musruk); 6, 7 — rock wall designs near Kapchugai [328, p. 150].

the Greek *helios* ("sun") and also noted that the etymology of the name Ariadne is "the one radiating beams" [739, p. 277].

Many scholars have discussed the mysterious grapheme referred to as *labyrinth* by the Greeks. Most of them only state the fact of its existence. Attempts to delve deeper into its meaning are few, and the interpretations proposed are shallow or simply arbitrary. Yet Krause's studies, published as far back as 1893, to a large extent lifted the veil from the mystery of the labyrinth. He was the first to pay attention to specific rock wall paintings and to suggest that the more intricate labyrinths were associated with them. He pointed out stone and turf arrangements in Northern Europe, as well as European legends connected with the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and Homer's legend of Troy, to elucidate the semantics of the Mediterranean labyrinth. Krause concluded that the myth of the labyrinth interprets the alternation of day and night, that the three protagonists of the myth personified respectively: the woman — the sun, the monster — the cause of the sun's disappearance at night, and the male hero — the cause of its reappearance at dawn; he found that the labyrinth was a fortress where the sun was held in captivity. Finally, Krause expressed the idea that the town of which Homer tells as of Troy was not really called Troy, and that the epic confounded legends about real historical events with a myth.

Krause's publication appeared at a time unfavorable to mythologists. The turn of the century was a period of pragmatism in reaction to the nineteenth century idealism. The "mythological school," which certainly had its weak points, was subjected to severe criticism and rejected. Krause evoked no response in scholarly circles. Subsequent studies on the labyrinth, none of which ever reached the level of Krause's research, generally do not even refer to it.

It is customary in the literature to associate another design, referred to as *babylon*, with the sign of the labyrinth. In Daghestan it is encountered on carved stones of buildings, on grave stelae and in rock wall paintings (Fig. 269). The *babylon* sign is found in various parts of Eastern Europe (i.e., north of Daghestan), more specifically, on the territory of medieval Russia, the Northern Caucasus, and Bulgaria, and also south of Daghestan, in Azerbaijan.

A symbol similar to the *babylon* was known in the Middle Ages in some regions of the Caucasus, and in

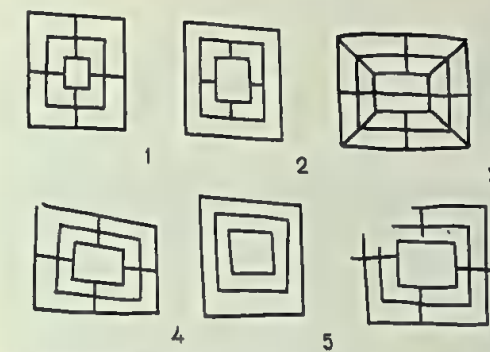


Fig. 270. Babylons in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus: 1, 2 — Southern Russia, 11th c. [31, p. 92]; 3 — Azerbaijan, rock wall design [49, fig. 134]; 4 — Taman Peninsula (S of Azov), 10th c. [462, p. 89]; 5 — Pskov (Russia), 12th c. [462, p. 88]; 6 — Bulgaria, 10th c. [462, p. 90].

ancient times in Western Asia and parts of the Mediterranean (Fig. 271).¹⁹⁴ This is evidence that the *babylon* is of Western Asian origin. It assumed certain forms in Azerbaijan, Daghestan, and Eastern Europe, where it became common. Had the *babylon* been of Russian or Slavic-Bulgarian origin, it would not have become a venerated symbol in Daghestan: there were no relations between the Slavs and Caucasian mountain dwellers at the time, and there were no borrowings of cult realia. Besides, of all known examples of this type of *babylon*, the Azerbaijani (Fig. 270: 3) seems the oldest.

B. Rybakov writes that the *babylon* was used by medieval Russian architects for mathematical calculations [436]. This figure, consisting of similar rectangles, can in fact, when crossed by diagonals, be adapted to devising proportional compositions. First, though, there is no proof that ancient compositions, and medieval architects used proportional compositions; most likely, the corresponding proportional constructions are the result of wishful thinking on the part of the authors of such publications. In particular, R. Garyaev, criticizing the idea of proportional compositions, maintains that the *babylon* design was never used for that purpose in Russia, and that Rybakov's interpretation is simply far-fetched [110, p. 26]. Secondly, if the origin of the *babylon* sign was mathematico-architectural, Bulgarians and Daghestanians would not have depicted it on gravestones, Azerbaijanians on rock walls, and Russians on landmark stones [530, p. 62].

Various publications suggest that the *babylon* sign derived from the labyrinth design or is even a variant of it. This opinion, however, is unfounded: the graphemes "labyrinth" and "babylon" are too different and it is unlikely that one was derived from the other. Yet A. Miller tried to show that the "babylon" did derive from the "labyrinth" [358, p. 51]. Cretan coins of the Hellenistic period bear various square designs, including labyrinths, meanders, etc., but nothing that resembles the *babylon* diagram (Fig. 272: 1-8). A design on a Lycian coin, which Miller classified as transitional from the labyrinth to the *babylon* (Fig. 272: 9).

¹⁹⁴ O. Bader dates the sign shown in Figure 271: 4 as Late Paleolithic. This dating of a sign that corresponds to symbolism used in Asia Minor since the sixth millennium B.C., seems incredible. Yet a similar sign of mutually inscribed rhombuses is known in the Paleolithic (Fig. 153: 2).



Fig. 271. Babylon-like sign: 1, 2 — designs on walls of structures in Daghestan, villages of Dusrakh and Musrukh; 3 — Southern Turkmenia, ca 4000 BC [572, p. 15]; 4 — France, rock wall design [44, fig. 14]; 5 — Ingushetia, 17th c. [367, p. 33]; 6 — Georgia, ca 800 CE [591, pl. 85]; 7 — Etruscan [744, p. 145]; 8 — Asia Minor, ca 5000 BC [764, p. 399]; 9 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [632, pl. 10]; 10, 11 — Western Siberia, Bronze Age [253, p. 28].

9), is a damaged picture of the combination of upright and oblique crosses (Fig. 272: 10). The idea that labyrinths and babylons are identical, which wanders from publication to publication, is based on the following circumstance: the local population of the White Sea region refers to stone labyrinths as "babylons." This could be ascribed to the imagination of people who saw the ruins of ancient city walls in the stone assemblages and named them after the city they knew from the Bible. But in Germany, too, ancient circular stone arrangements, as well as mounds surrounded with circles of stones, are called babylons [739, p. 107]. On the other hand, stone arrangements in Northern Europe are referred to by the local population as "ruins of Jerusalem" or "walls of Jericho" [761, p. 150], etc.

Though authors who identify the graphemes "labyrinth" and "babilon" do so because of a misconception, there is nevertheless a semantic connection between the two.

Babylons are composed of several (usually three) inscribed rectangles or squares. Such a sign symbolized earth in Asia Minor during the Neolithic (Fig. 271: 8). In the Mediterranean and Western European versions, two intersecting diagonals divide the rectangle into four parts, as on the sign of the four quarters of the world from Asia Minor (Fig. 160: 5). The same role is played by the upright cross in Eastern European and Daghestanian babylons. An oblique cross in this variant of the babilon connects five small circles, four situated at its ends and one at the intersection (Fig. 271: 6); this is a Neolithic symbol of the universe (Fig. 193: 1).

The babilon sign resembles the ground plan of a Babylon tower (ziggurat), or of an ancient Mexican pyramid, or

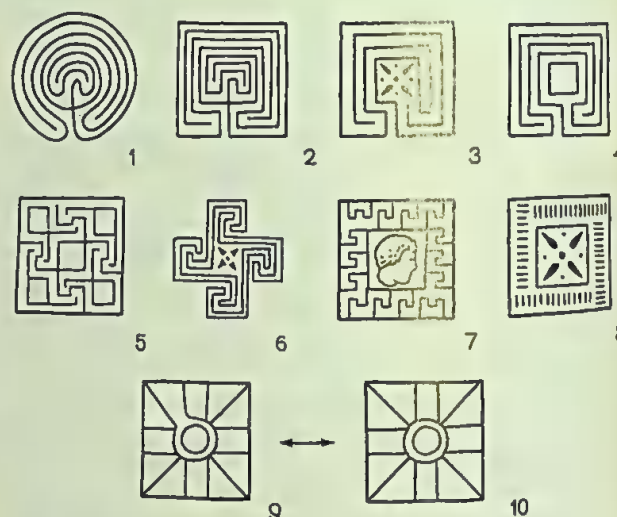


Fig. 272. Labyrinths and other diagrams: 1—8 — Cretan coins of 3rd to 1st centuries BC [842, pls. 4-6]; 9 — Lycian coin [358, p. 51]; 10 — reconstruction of design on the Lycian coin.

of an early medieval Cambodian cult edifice, a stepped platform with a monumental tower at the center and two crisscrossing main axes oriented on the directions of the world.

It was mentioned above that the sign in the form of several mutually inscribed rectangles was the plan of a "sacred mount" symbolizing the center of the earth, and that this sign was an earth symbol. Thus, though the babilon is not associated with the labyrinth morphologically, it is very close semantically: both are representations of the underworld god's fortress home in different versions of its structure.

Like other earth god symbols, the babilon sometimes appears in combination with a symbol of the heaven goddess (Fig. 271: 9-11).

JANUS AND THE TWINS

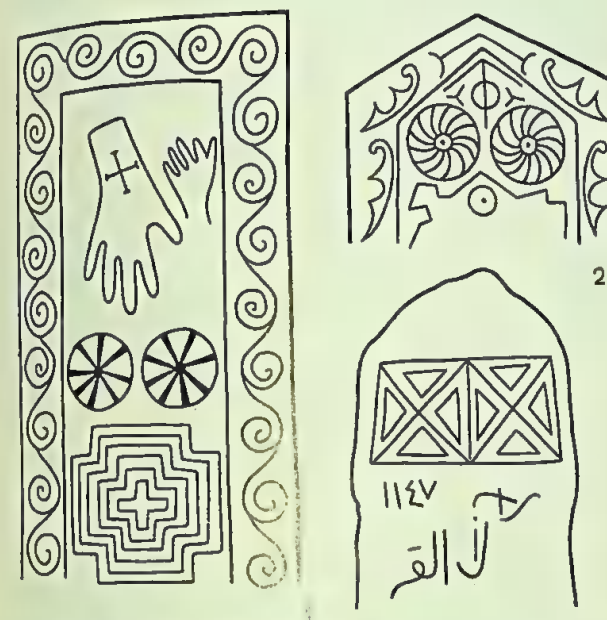


Fig. 273. Double "sun" symbols in Daghestan: 1—3 — grave stelae, 1600—1800, Machada and Mul'kati [141, pp. 103, 162]; 4—6 — decorations on walls of structures, Tind, Tsugni, and Turag.

This chapter will analyze forms of expressing doubleness in symbols and myths.

A decorative motif of a pair of rosettes can be found in Daghestan. The rosettes are of the same form as when they appear singly: multiradial, or with six petals or whorls (Fig. 273: 1, 2, 4). If the rosette represents the sun, two rosettes must be two suns. Perhaps this meant two solar situations. An Egyptian myth tells about the day sun and the night sun that makes its way through the underworld. This myth is not essentially Egyptian: various cultures had conceptions of two suns, one radiant and one "black," subterranean [198, p. 273]. Even the Aztecs had this notion [740, p. 105].

This interpretation of the sign of two suns does not rule out another one: the symbol could be an ideograph of the notion of two states of the sun during the year, i.e., of two half-year solar phases. The following Chechenian tale has been recorded: "Twice a year there occurs a solstice, in summer and in winter. These are times when the sun stays at home with its mother. Upon leaving its home, the sun travels for six months, then comes back home and embarks on another six-month journey" [135, pp. 119, 120]. The Indian cosmogony held the notion that the sun moves southwards half-a-year and northwards half-a-year [97, p. 258]. Time in the Tajik folk calendar was counted half-a-year "upwards" and half-a-year "downwards" [450, pp. 74-77].

In addition to the division of the year by the solstices, it was also divided into the warm and cold halves. Words for the warm and cold seasons in Indo-European languages



are older than those for the year; besides, the latter are not related in the different languages [513, pp. 186, 187], which suggests that at a certain stage of ancient history there was no notion of the year, but only notions of the warm and cold annual seasons. Words for half-year periods are older not only than those designating the year, but also than those for three-month periods. For example, eastern Slavic terms for the inbetween seasons were once derived

from the names for the warm and cold seasons: spring was called "pre-summer", and autumn "pre-winter".

The borderlines between the halves of the year were unrelated to solar phases, and they varied. The Jewish year is divided into two by the months Nisan (approximately in April) and Tishri (approximately in October) both considered the first months of the year. On the British Isles, a new fire was kindled in ancient times on the 1st of May and on the 1st of November; it must have symbolized the beginning of a new period of time. In Ancient Greece, the demarcations between the two half-years fell in mid-May and mid-November [228a, p. 252]. In Russia, two days in the year were dedicated to Yuri (George) — the 23rd of April and the 26th of November; it was customary to draw up contracts and deals for periods between these two dates, which suggests that the counting of time once started from them. It is of interest that the St. George's day observed in autumn was also St. Catherine's day; this may be an indication that the warm and cold halves of the year were distinguished as masculine and feminine. Eastern Slavs also had a different division of the year into two halves: they held so-called "snake festivals" on the 25th of March (the springtime awakening of reptiles after hibernation) and the 14th of September (when snakes hide underground). An Albanian folk calendar divides the year into two seasons separated by the 23rd of April (St. George's day) and the 26th of October (St. Demetrius' day). All this can indicate that time was once counted by half-years.

Like other solar symbols, the sign of two "suns" existed long before it acquired solar meaning. It was known during the Neolithic (Fig. 292: 12), while an element in the form of two disks can be discerned in the adornment of Paleolithic so-called "warders." At that time it must have been a double-heaven symbol.

In Daghestan, as well as in many other parts of the world from ancient times until the twentieth century, one can find an architectural detail imitating a pair of female breasts. They are sometimes formed as a double symbol of the heaven goddess: there are rays along the circumference of the breasts or they carry carved vortical rosettes (Fig. 373: 2). The double rosette may be perceived in another way: if it looks like two flowers (Fig. 274: 3) it must be a double earth symbol; as will be shown, there were also double symbols of the earth god. The Ten Commandments received by Moses were written on two tablets, which may be associated with a double heaven symbol; when bread is blessed, two loaves are held, which may be interpreted as a double symbol of earth; two candles are lit on the Sabbath, which would have the same original meaning.

In Daghestan, as well as in other places, a double sign of a crossed square is encountered (Figs. 273: 3; 283: 2). This must have been a symbol of the double sun since the Bronze Age, earlier a double-earth symbol (Fig. 160: 5). The decorative element in the form of two squares (Fig. 273: 5) most probably represents the double earth. Two labyrinths (Fig. 273: 6) may be understood either as a double-heaven symbol or as a double-earth symbol, because, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the labyrinth is semantically associated with the concepts of both heaven and the underworld.



Fig. 274. Double "sun" symbols in various cultures: 1 — Chechenia [797, p. 56]; 2 — Russia, 12th c. [473, p. 105]; 3 — Crimea, ca 400 BC [216, p. 264]; 4 — Mesopotamia, ca 2500 BC [215, pl. 186]; 5 — Armenia, ca 700 CE [32, pl. 53]; 6 — Denmark, Bronze Age [628, p. 176].

The decorative motif, or symbol, of two rosettes was quite widespread in ancient times and in the Middle Ages (Fig. 274). These diagrams, however, do not enable definite conclusions as to the meaning of the symbol.

Byzantine priests wore two crosses on their shoulders; saints were portrayed in similar attire (Fig. 275: 4). This custom is older than the Church, judging by crosses on traditional folk garments (Fig. 275: 5). If the tradition goes back to Bronze Age symbolism, two crosses on the shoulders would signify two suns. A human figure represented with a pair of suns on the shoulders was recorded in Daghestan (Fig. 275: 1); these signs may be understood as both solar and heaven symbols. However, the swastika on the shoulders of Iranian Neolithic figurines (Fig. 275: 2, 3) was not yet a solar symbol at that time.

Excavations of a burial ground in Checheno-Ingushetia,



Fig. 275. Two "suns" symbol on human figure: 1 — grave stela, Daghestan [323, p. 43]; 2, 3 — figurines, Iran, ca 3000 BC [716, pl. 2]; 4 — Byzantine icon; 5 — old Russian garment.

dating from the first millennium B.C., have revealed plates shaped like a figure eight with two swastikas (Fig. 276: 1). The swastika was a solar symbol since the Bronze Age; it is possible that bearers of the culture who produced these plates attached that meaning to it. But triangles with these plates turned inwards are arranged along the perimeter of the plates; this gives reason to regard the 8-shaped plate as a double-heaven symbol matching the double symbol of earth represented in this context by the swastika.

The archeologists V. Markovin and R. Munchaev, who studied this burial place, wrote that the bizarre 8-shaped plates they found "point to the indigenous development of ancient tribes which inhabited the Assa Ravine" [333, p. 48]. Any ethnic group has particular indigenous characteristics of its own; however, these plates do not fall into that category. The shape was common far outside the Assa Ravine. An 8-shaped element of obviously symbolic significance, albeit forgotten by the 19th century, can be observed in Ossetian folk embroidery (Fig. 276: 3). Amulets

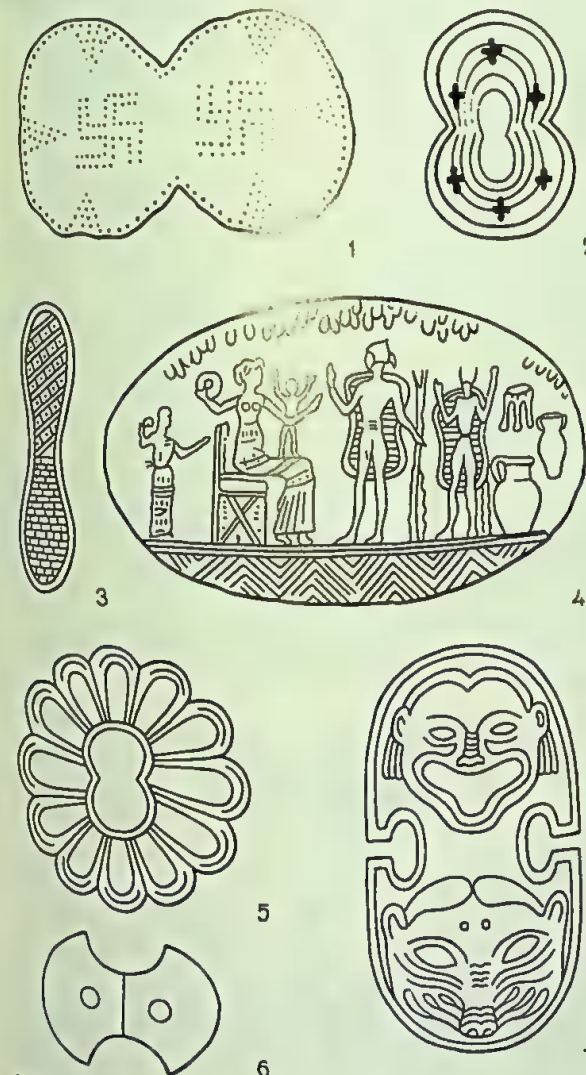


Fig. 276. "Shield" symbol: 1 — plate from a burial ground, 500 BC, Northern Caucasus [388, p. 146]; 2 — ancient Grecian amulet [65, p. 224]; 3 — element of Ossetian embroidery [22, p. 103]; 4 — shields in Eastern Mediterranean [299, p. 300]; 5 — ancient Crete [867, p. 406]; 6 — Italy, Neolithic [856, p. 116]; 7 — Etruscan, ca 600 BC [692, pl. 89].



Fig. 277. Sign of pair of eyes: 1 — Western Europe, Paleolithic [703, pl. 64]; 2 — Mesopotamia, 2000 BC [544, p. 56]; 3 — Troy [826, p. 35]; 4, 5 — Asia Minor, 6000 BC [764b, p. 321].

of this shape were in use in Ancient Greece (Fig. 276: 2). Figure of eight shaped plates were common in Asia Minor in the third millennium B.C. [782a, Table 314] and were later used by the Hittites [615, Table 19]. Cult objects of similar shape existed in pre-Indo-European Crete (Fig. 276: 6); one can readily recognize the goddess' double symbol here — a semioval with a dot (a cloud sign with seed, cf. Fig. 12). Another ancient Cretan object has an 8-shaped element at the center of a rosette (Fig. 276: 5), the rosette being an emblem of the heaven goddess. The Etruscans used similar two-element designs (Fig. 276: 7).

Symmetrical Neolithic objects painstakingly carved from stone were found in America. They must have been fetishes of the double deity; one of them almost precisely echoes the Cretan object shown in Figure 276: 6 [862, p. 452].

Eight-shaped shields can be seen in ancient Cretan pictures (Fig. 276: 4). It is doubtful whether the appearance of these shields could have served as a prototype for the cult objects being analyzed. The shields do not look functional. Their shape could not have been prompted by practical considerations: such shields would be difficult to handle and would leave the warrior exposed at the waist, the most vulnerable portion of the body. It seems obvious that such shields were made to imitate a cult emblem. This is a striking example of a religious symbol influencing the shape of an object as vitally important as the shield.

Ancient artifacts from the Paleolithic found from the extreme west of Europe to Sumer, bear symbolic representations of a pair of eyes (Fig. 277). These eyes are not human, but divine. Not infrequently this motif does not even resemble eyes, at any rate at the beginning. Its two elements are often shaped like little circles, rather than eyes (Fig. 277: 5). Ancient cult objects with occasionally shaped ornamental elements (Fig. 278: 1-4) are occasionally found on the Iberian Peninsula. It seems certain that this grapheme did not initially have any ocular connotations.



Fig. 278. Spectacle-like motif in European Neolithic ornamentation: 1-4 — Spain [788, pl. 20; 648, p. 273; 744, p. 101]; 5, 6 — Troy [826, p. 156; 824, p. 281]; 7 — Denmark [719, p. 331]; 8 — Hungary [743, p. 109].

For example, the object shown in Figure 278: 1 has no anthropomorphic traits, and there are two pairs of "eyes" on it. These are clearly double signs of heaven. The grapheme in other examples presented here has the same meaning, judging by its outlines. The symbol was later reinterpreted as a pair of eyes (Fig. 278: 5, 8). Because this double symbol of the goddess resembled a pair of round eyes, the ancient Greeks thought the owl was Athene's bird, and the goddess was referred to as "owl-eyed." The corresponding idea reached America: the goddess of love of the American Indians was transformed into an owl [371b, p. 545].

Not only the double heaven sign served as a model for drawing a pair of eyes in the form of little circles. The eyes of a mythical creature in a Paleolithic painting are formed in the same manner (Fig. 60: 1). Another Paleolithic design depicts two eyes in the sky (Fig. 277: 1).¹⁹⁵ In the Bronze Age the eyes of the heavenly bull resembled two luminaries (Fig. 159: 2). It was customary in Ancient Egypt, India, the Far East, and America to depict eyes on both sides of a boat's prow [204, pp. 71-75]; in this instance the eye was usually rendered as a circle with a dot, or as another "astral" sign rather than naturalistically. All this suggests that a notion existed of the two eyes of a certain

¹⁹⁵These are indeed eyes: a similar technique of drawing eyes was used during the Neolithic (Fig. 336: 4).

supernatural creature, and that they were perceived as heavenly luminaries.

The moon and the sun were considered the eyes of the heaven god in Ancient Egypt and India. Yet it is very probable that the designs in question have a different meaning.

Nowadays few people, with the exception of astronomers and inquisitive schoolboys, know about the Gemini (the Twins) Constellation. In ancient times it was known to everyone. If one views the sky unobstructed by buildings, two stars, like two eyes, can be seen shining in the western, relatively starless part. They looked even more impressive about four thousand years ago, when their position more strongly resembled a pair of eyes. These stars, standing out conspicuously in the evening sky, were beacons for travelers, especially seafarers (they were called "navigators' stars"). Perhaps the constellation was perceived as the face of a mysterious celestial creature.

The divine twins were among the major personalities in ancient Indian and Greek myths. They were called Ashvinas in India and Dioscuri in Greece. Winged horses draw their chariots. The Sanskrit name for the Twins is *Aśvīnau*, which means "possessing horses" or "originating from a horse" [778b, p. 542; 606, p. 79]; the Greek Dioscuri were mentioned with the attribute "possessing white horses" [851, p. 12]. In Russian tradition, the twin saints Flor and Lavr were patrons of horses; they were usually pictured as riders, although the hagiographers do not associate them with horses [365, p. 325]. The Daghestanian Twins were also portrayed on horseback (Fig. 279: 1). The connection between the divine twins and horses indicates that they were thought of in association either with the solar deity or with the lord of the underworld (the equine image had this dual meaning).

Authors of a number of publications on the Twins believe the images of Ashvinas and Dioscuri are solar in origin. However, this hypothesis is not convincingly argued. Some Bronze period designs represent the Twins accompanied by signs which might be perceived as solar (Fig. 279: 2, 5); but these are heaven symbols assimilated from the Neolithic period. It will become clear from the following discussion why the Great Goddess' emblems were associated with the Twins.

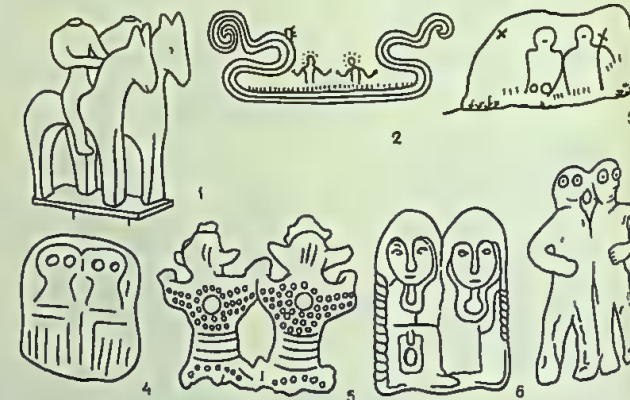


Fig. 279. Anthropomorphic representations of Twins, Bronze Age: 1 — Daghestan [271, p. 179]; 2 — Denmark [719, p. 198]; 3 — France [659, p. 59]; 4 — Northern Syria [701, fig. 661]; 5 — Ossetia [263, p. 233]; 6 — Volga region [497, pl. 5]; 7 — Italy [719, n. 451].

It cannot be ruled out, generally speaking, that ancient traditions associated the Twins with the sun. The connection might be varied in character. The sun maiden was the Twins' sister in the system of Neolithic mythopoetical conceptions. Perhaps this was because six thousand years ago, when the constellations got the names that are still in use, the sun was in the Gemini Constellation during the vernal equinox. Some ancient myths about the Twins say that when one of them dies, the other revives; this may be a reflection on the dying and reviving sun. Some scholars believe the Twins of the ancient Indian myths symbolize east and west [193, pp. 131, 135]. In a Latvian song, a god has red-headed twin sons, one of whom travels in daylight, the other at night.

D. Words, who wrote a fundamental investigation on the divine twins [851], came to the conclusion that the available evidence does not justify any plausible interpretation of this mythological image. It is indeed an impossible undertaking without going beyond the framework of Indo-European mythology.

Myths about twins, in some cases also a cult of divine twins, have been recorded among various peoples in almost the entire world. A. Zolotarev believed that mythological conceptions involving the twins reflected the dual clan organization of primeval society [186]. But Words, who presents evidence that the birth of twins was attributed to enhanced fertility or to the intervention of supernatural forces, seems closer to the truth. This factor was pointed out earlier by L. Sternberg who considered it causative in the mythicization of the twins [606, pp. 98-101].

The Indo-European myth about divine twins, reflected in legends about the Dioscuri in Greece, the Ashvinas in India, and vague allusions in Lithuanian songs, comprises elements which place its origin in the early farming period.

In some legends the Twins are called swans [851, p. 24]. A corresponding conception is probably illustrated by pictures of a pair of swans on Karelian rock faces (Fig. 280: 5). It is quite likely that a pair of bispirals is a schematized version of such an image (Fig. 119). The line connecting the two swans corresponds to a similar connection of two bispirals (Fig. 120: 1, 2).

Both the Karelian and the Cretan designs illustrate

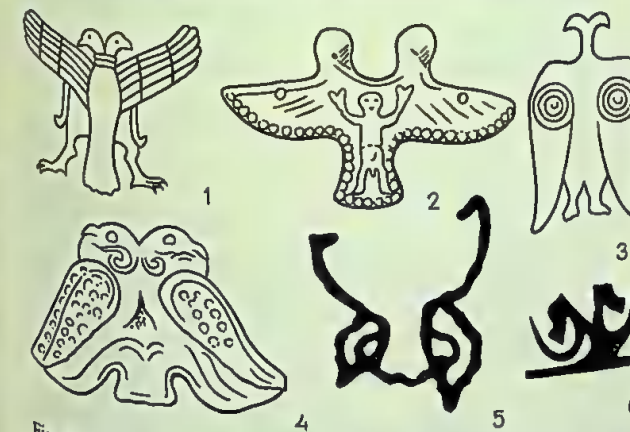


Fig. 280. Double and two-headed bird: 1 — Hittite, ca 1500 BC [615, p. 111]; 2 — Volga region, ca 500 BC [497, pl. 5]; 3 — Armenia, 12th c. [374, p. 80]; 4 — Greece, ca 2000 BC [825, p. 213]; 5 — Karelia, ca 2500 BC [443, pl. 8]; 6 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 355].

beliefs stemming from the Neolithic religion. The Neolithic goddess was often pictured as a bird (Fig. 377); perhaps the Twins are her children. In a certain African tribe, a woman who has given birth to twins is awarded a name meaning "heaven" [558, p. 81]. A pair of bispirals could also symbolize two snakes; in such a case the Twins are the children of the goddess' spouse, the serpent of the underworld. The Egyptian goddess Neith, who has some characteristics of the Neolithic Great Goddess (progenitrix of people and gods, patroness of warfare and hunting, etc.), was portrayed nursing two little crocodiles (the crocodile represented the lower universe). In Ancient Peru, male twins were venerated as sons of the thundergod (who is the underworld god). An African tribe believes that twins are in some magic way associated with scorpions (the scorpion will be shown elsewhere in this book to be a creature representing the Great Goddess). Since the Twins were regarded as children of gods who were not always highly esteemed, this caused some ambivalence towards human twins: they were venerated by some communities, while others considered them wicked and even put them to death. In India the Ashvinas were believed to be sons of heaven, and the Greek Dioscuri were considered sons of Zeus, i.e., of the heaven god. This can be regarded as a later interpretation of the Twins as sons of the early farmers' heaven goddess. Myths mention their sister, who must be the sun maiden, the daughter of the heaven goddess.

A cult stone in Georgia has been reported as phallic in shape. It bears a cross, owing to which it has been called "solar" [452, p. 231] (it is not specified whether this is its local name or one given by the author of the publication). The cross may indeed be considered a symbol of the post-Neolithic sun god, but it was also a symbol of the Neolithic earth god. There is a snake image on the stone, from which it can be concluded that the object was after all a fetish of the earth god. There are also images of two cubs; these may be the earth god's children.

The Indian name for the Twins, *Aśvīnau* ("equine"), may also be understood as "originating from the horse"; now, the stallion was considered an incarnation of the underworld god. This is probably why two horse heads in Lithuanian folk art are referred to as "god's sons" [693, p. 114].

The Dioscuri were somehow associated with sacred fire [851, p. 86]. The Ashvinas possessed an instrument which they used to procure fire. According to an old Teutonic legend, the primeval fire was lit by "two brothers" or "twins" [721, pp. 76, 85]. A Tasmanian myth relates that fire was procured for people by two youths who climbed a mountain where "our fathers" threw fire to them from heaven, after which the youths rose to heaven as two stars. It transpires from all this that the Twins are associated with the underworld god who is known to have manifested himself through fire. The Roman Mars, whose image will be shown to have originated from the Neolithic earth god, was the protector of the twins Romulus and Remus. In Central American myths a winged serpent is a protector of twins; patronage is apparently a modification of paternity. The divine twins in myths of various peoples are often children of thunder or children of the serpent and are symbolized by the color red [371a, pp. 176, 470]. In

The double-headed bird was a stable element in the symbolism of Western Asia, Europe, and the Caucasus from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages (Fig. 280). The state emblem of the Russian monarchy — the double-headed eagle

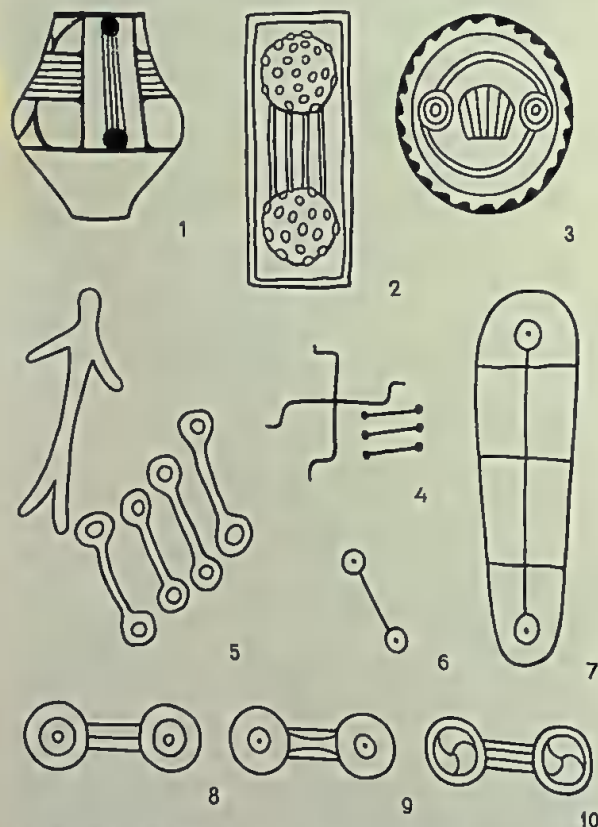


Fig. 281. Sign of two disks: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [468a, p. 41]; 2 — Ilion (Troy), Classical Antiquity [824, p. 690]; 3 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [719, p. 315]; 4 — design on a house wall, Daghestan, Khushitad; 5 — rock wall design in California [746, fig. 61]; 6, 7 — rock wall designs in Kirghizia [184, pls. 10, 8]; 8—10 — signs on pre-Christian grave stelae in Western Europe [624, pp. 88, 89].



Fig. 282. Anthropomorphic figures expressing oneness of doubleness: 1 — Sumer [576, p. 319]; 2 — Northern Russia, Neolithic [180, p. 104]; 3, 4 — Karelia, Aeneolithic [699, p. 190; 443, pl. 18].

In some regions of Western Asia, Europe, and the Caucasus, as well as among North American Indians, one encounters a symbol in the form of two disks connected by lines (Fig. 281). During the Neolithic, the disk was a heaven symbol; therefore the design expresses the concept of "dual-though-one heaven." There are anthropomorphic interpretations of the paired symbol (Fig. 282), from which it follows that the two elements belonged to a single deity.

Certain features of various versions of this grapheme confirm that it represents two heavenly signs. For instance, in some cases the disk bears concentric circles (Fig. 281: 3, 8). An interesting design in this respect is shown in Figure 281: 2: the disks have little pieces attached comparable to those on the statuette of the goddess (Fig. 14: 2). A sign of two dots connected by a line is called "the vault of heaven" in a medieval Armenian manuscript [340, p. 10]. Of course, one should not rely on medieval interpretations of ancient symbols, yet it is significant that the symbol evoked heavenly associations. It appears that the semantics of the double heaven consists in the duality of the Great Goddess. This conception is not quite clear to us now; it may have had a variety of meanings in the past.

The double symbol in its various graphic versions continued in use persistently since the Bronze Age. This implies that it was endowed with special significance, which, however, must have been different from its meaning in the

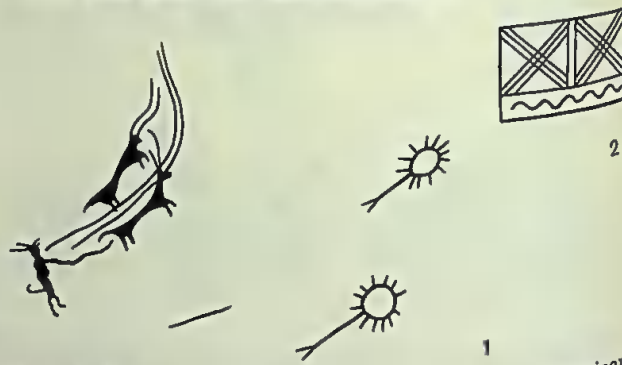


Fig. 283. Two suns as symbolic representation of solstice or equinox. 1 — rock wall design in mountains of Central Asia, Bronze Age [14, p. 191]; 2 — sign on a 4th c. vessel, Ukraine [473, p. 105].

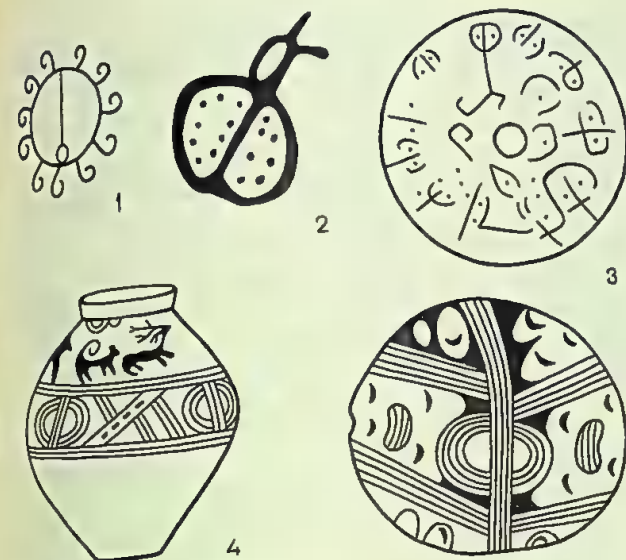


Fig. 284. Φ -shaped sign: 1 — design on a mosque wall, Daghestan, Khpedj, ca 1900; 2 — rock wall design in mountains of Central Asia [551, p. 70]; 3 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, p. 312]; 4, 5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni, ca 3000 BC [468b, p. 27; 696, p. 164].

Neolithic, since the nature of beliefs had undergone changes. At later periods the disks were probably interpreted as two suns.

A unique ancient design (Fig. 283: 1) brings us closer to understanding the double sun symbol. The design is composed of two solar signs separated by a line; next to them is a plowman plowing with two bulls. Y. Golen-dukhin, who published this design, believes it to be a formula designating the day of the vernal equinox (the 24th of March) when tilling began [114, p. 190]. This explanation seems convincing enough. It is this ancient ritual which must have given rise to a Chinese custom following which the emperor tilled a symbolic furrow in early spring, signaling the start of field work.

The two solar representations here have 12 rays each. This leads Golendukhin to assume that one designated day and the other night, while the entire design of two solar signs with a stroke between is a symbolic designation of the 24 hour day at the equinox, when both day and night last 12 hours each. Another possibility is that the picture reflects the calendar borderline terminating a past solar phase and beginning a new one, the two suns being symbolic designations of the two half-years.

B. Rybakov shows in his deciphering of an ancient calendar recorded by means of symbols on a fourth century vessel, that the symbol composed of two oblique crosses and a wavy line (Fig. 283: 2) stands for June [473, p. 105], the month of the summer solstice. It is possible that here the two solar signs (the oblique cross within a square) designate two half years, and the whole symbol means the end of one half year and the beginning of the other. The wavy line is a sign of water; combined with solar signs, it apparently expresses the major role played by sacral fire and water in Ivan-Kupala (Midsummer) festival rites.

A Cretan rosette with an 8-shaped core (Fig. 276: 5) has 12 petals; this may be regarded as a symbol of the year consisting of 12 months, or of two half year periods. The 0-shaped signs in Figure 284 may symbolize not only

the "two regions of heaven" (an expression in ancient Egyptian texts), but also the two halves of the year.

A design from Tripolce shown in Figure 284: 5 apparently illustrates the myth of the world issuing from a split egg. But the two parts, earth and heaven, are identical, and there is a moon in each of the halves. The moon (month) is a unit of time. It is likely that the design symbolizes the concept of the two halves of the year.

Designs have reached us from the Neolithic expressing certain conceptions of "duality" and "quadrupartition"; these conceptions were interrelated (Fig. 208). Above, we analyzed signs in the form of a disk with two or four inscribed segments (Fig. 104: 6, 7); these signs are similar not only in shape, but also semantically, judging by their interchangeability in like compositions. It may be assumed that ancient double and quadrupartite graphic symbols expressed the notions of divisions of both space and time.

The Tripolye design illustrating the division of the world into two parts (Fig. 208: 10) shows that each part itself is two-fold. This design may be perceived as a graphic expression of the following concept: the cosmic egg split to produce heaven and earth; each of the deities personifying these regions of the universe is, in turn, dual. What does their duality amount to? Perhaps it implies that each of them experiences both the winter and the summer phases? That the two- and four-partite symbols could designate not only spatial, but also temporal notions, is attested, for example, by Figure 208: 9: the sky around the earth, designated by a cross, is divided into two parts, with a bird, the heaven goddess' symbol, in each part. This design may illustrate a Neolithic myth which presumably preceded the Indo-European notion of the sun bird flying southward half a year and northward the other half.

The grapheme in Figure 284: 1, which apparently symbolized a double sun (two half-year solar phases) during the Bronze Age, would have symbolized a double heaven during the Neolithic. This latter notion could also be expressed by the grapheme shown in Figure 284: 2. This shows not only a disk divided into halves, but also two heaven signs, with the seed watered by heavenly moisture (cf. Fig. 12: 1).

In the chapter "Sunrise and Sunset" we analyzed different versions of the paired semiovals symbol composed of two cloud signs. Sometimes the semioval has a dot inside (Fig. 285: 2) to symbolize seed (cf. Fig. 12: 5). During the Bronze Age, the dots were sometimes placed outside the semiovals (Fig. 285: 1), and the symbol clearly changed in meaning. However, we should look into the different

In that case, however, we should look into a different line of evolution of this Neolithic grapheme. The two disk

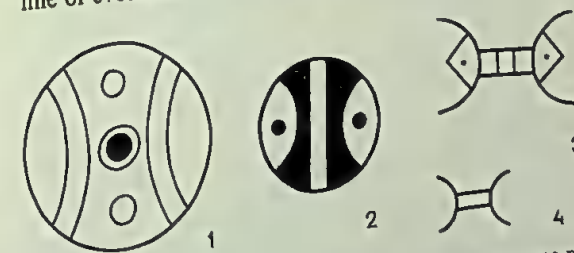


Fig. 285. Variants of semioval symbol paired: 1 — Troy, ca 2000 BC [827, pl. 38]; 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [75, p. 81]; 3 — Elam [719, pp. 11, 92]; 4 — astrological sign of Twins.



Fig. 286. Ancient representation of two-faced deity: 1 — Sumer [635, pl. 2]; 2 — Egypt [639, p. 248]; 3 — Assyria [635, pl. 4]; 4 — Caucasus [494, p. 169]; 5 — Hittite [689, pl. 24].

heaven signs could be connected by lines (Fig. 281: 1, 2), so could the two arc heaven signs (Fig. 285: 3, 4). Comparison of 2 and 3 of Figure 285, both dating to the third millennium B.C., shows that they could have had a similar if not identical meaning.

In Figure 285: 2, the disk is halved by a diametral line. In Figure 285: 3, the halves of the disk are turned 180° and connected by a "copula." The arcs inscribed in the disk are transformed into triangles (this phenomenon is known to have been quite common). As a result, we have a graphic figure resembling two heads facing in opposite directions. Hence, probably, the image of the double-faced deity (Fig. 286).

The sign in Figure 285: 3 was not the only one of the kind, and the image of the double-faced god did not originate from it alone. Let us look at a Trojan design (Fig. 284: 3), where O-shaped signs, in a version with a dot within the semioval, are anthropomorphized. The following may serve as proof that this design is not fortuitous. J. Garstang, writing on the Hittites, published the designs shown in Figure 286: 5 and declared that the evolution of these figures proceeded from a more complete anthropomorphic form to a more stylized one. However, the latter is much older than the former; it is therefore logical to assume that the evolution took the opposite course — from the symbol to the image. Numerous examples (the emergence of cult-mythological images of the wheel, comb, hair, trident, spear, mirror, ram, labris, butterfly, anchor, necklace, crossed shoulder-belts, a pair of eyes, and 8-shaped shield) prove that this course of evolution did in fact take place and even constituted a certain pattern.

To substantiate the above hypothesis, let us take, in particular, the following fact: the sign of a disk divided into halves by a diametral line (like those shown in Figures 285: 2 and 284: 1) was an ancient symbol of Janus [748, p. 395]. The conclusion that the double head representation is an anthropomorphized O-shaped sign was also reached by a German scholar O. Huth [721, p. 45].

The oldest known double-faced god image is encountered in Sumerian representations dating from the third millennium B.C.; this deity plays the role of a messenger of



Fig. 287. Affronted animals or birds: 1 — North Ossetia, 1000 BC [646c, pl. 6]; 2 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [716, p. 67]; 3 — Daghestan, ca 1000 BC [35, p. 140]; 4 — Germany, ca 1900 [503b, p. 20]; 5 — Greece, ca 1000 BC [845, p. 291]; 6, 7 — Iran, ca 500 BC and ca 3000 BC [716, pp. 58, 175]; 8 — France, Paleolithic [782a, pl. 80]; 9 — Ossetia, ca 1900 [22, p. 119]; 10 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [716, p. 81]; 11 — Mexico, ca 1400 CE.

the supreme god Enki. No explanation of his double face is offered in Sumerian myths; he seems to have been borrowed. A double-faced god was also known to the Greeks, Etruscans, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Africans, Oceanians, Indians of pre-Columbian America [721, p. 27], and tribes which inhabited the northern European part of the USSR in the third millennium B.C. [290b, p. 193]. He was referred to as Oannes by the ancient people of Western Asia, Astika¹⁹⁶ by the Hindus, Isimu or Izimud by the Sumerians, and Izumi by the Hittites [635, p. 1]. The Sumerians used the name Oannes for the half-man, half-fish who, according to the myth, came from the sea and brought civilization to peoples. Thus Oannes is a benefactor of humanity, a characteristic of the Twins. The "culture hero" was also a benefactor; his

¹⁹⁶See chapter "The Swastika."

image seems to have originated from the sun-bearing stag, with a number of features of the Neolithic underworld god.

The name of the Roman Janus has been traced to *janua* ('door'), *jānus* ('passage'). There may be an etymological association here, though this does not mean that the name Janus derived from the words for door, passage. It could as well be the other way round. Besides, the notion 'passage' is conveyed by the similar word *anus* which also meant 'round, circle' or 'old woman,' i.e., it is definitely within the range of notions connected with the early farmers' religion.¹⁹⁷

The Roman Janus had several and varied functions. He was the god of time; he personified the boundary between the end of the past year and beginning of the new; he was the patron of all beginnings and undertakings. His two faces turned to the past and the future. Janus was concerned with sunrise, he opened the gates of the sun in the morning and locked them in the evening. His statue in the temple faced east and west.

Janus' faces in their oldest representations are dissimilar: one is beardless, the other bearded, or one white, the other black [681, p. 39]. This may be understood to symbolize sunrise and sunset or the two halves of the year. According to Herodotus, the sun god of the Pelasgians had two faces, corresponding to the two halves of the year [541, p. 76]; he was in all likelihood a deity like Janus, rather than the sun god.

Temples dedicated to Janus were unusual in their plan: they had two opposite entrances [818, p. 141], apparently symbolizing sunrise and sunset or the two halves of the year. It is noteworthy that in Ingushetia, on the Mat-Loam Mountain, there is a 10th—11th century pagan temple still venerated by the local population as recently as the beginning of the 20th century, which had two opposite entrances oriented east and west.

O. Huth, who wrote a monograph on Janus, holds that Janus was the god of the year and offers argumentation to support this hypothesis [721, pp. 40–44]. The Roman Janus was not only double faced, but also four faced [200, p. 34], which agrees with the division of the year into two or four parts. Twelve altars were dedicated to Janus in Rome; this obviously symbolized the 12 months of the year under the god's patronage. Janus' symbol, a circle with a line across it, designated the year in ancient Germanic runes; in peasant calendars of medieval Germany it marked the beginning and the middle of the year [721, pp. 45, 46].

There is other evidence supporting the assumption that Janus was somehow associated with the summer solstice. Eastern Slavs called the solstice Ivan's day; in the Christian tradition it is dedicated to St. John. Now, Ivan and John are the same as Yan and Janus.¹⁹⁸ The summer solstice festival observed by western Slavs involved hailing Yan

¹⁹⁷It is of interest that both in Sanskrit and in the Kechuan (Peru) language, *yna* means 'black.' Are the Chinese Yang and Yin related to it?

¹⁹⁸We have here a confusion of similar names of dissimilar origin: 1) the name of the early farmers' deity which became Oannes in the Ancient Orient and Janus in Ancient Rome; 2) the Hebrew Yohanan, deriving from Yehohanan ('Yahweh is merciful') which acquired the form Johann or Johannes in Christian tradition.

[541, p. 268]. In similar mythological contexts, the hero is called Yan by western and Ivan by eastern Slavs [199, p. 111].

All these facts confirm Huth's opinion that Janus was the deity of the year. Yet other considerations can be quoted. G. Fraser identifies Janus with Jupiter, and his argumentation is not without substance [558, p. 191]. Janus was venerated together with Juno [721, pp. 17, 18]; this may be regarded as a relic of the Neolithic cult of two major deities. Janus was sometimes referred to as Janus-Quirinus, but Quirinus, the ancient Roman patron of agriculture, was originally the Neolithic earth god. The temple of Janus in Ancient Rome was closed in years of peace; this was apparently because Janus was regarded as a patron of warfare. Once, however, this function belonged to the underworld god; the specialized war gods of different peoples have features pointing to their descent from the Great God of the Neolithic religion. The Etruscan Culsans and Italic Ani, predecessors of Janus, had four faces; like four-faced deities of other peoples, they apparently represented the earth god, the lord of the four quarters of the world. The Italic name of this deity, Ani, is similar to that of the Sumerian heaven god An (the Akkadian Anu) and to the name Janus proper, especially without the ending -us. But the heaven god (Jupiter, An) is a modification of the Neolithic earth god, his detached heavenly manifestation.

The name Oannes (the Western Asian Anu with the Indo-European ending -s) is sometimes compared to Aun, the benevolent fish-like Semitic deity. The name of Aun is similar to Italic Ani, who, having four faces, probably originates from the earth god, and to the name of the Sumerian heaven god An. The Romans treated Janus as the oldest god and referred to him as Janus Pater, "father" being the title of the supreme deity, the Neolithic earth god or post-Neolithic heaven god.

It follows from all this that Janus was originally the Great God of the Neolithic religion who, like the Great Goddess, was perceived as dual. The source of this duality is not quite clear, but in the course of time it could have become associated with the concept of the two halves of the year.

Eastern Slavs associated the summer solstice not only with Yan/Ivan, but also with Kupala. Songs sung during this festival declared "Kupala today, Ivan tomorrow" [489d, p. 45; 491, p. 173]. Does this imply that Ivan and Kupala personified two halves of the year? Were they twins? Ancient Germanic tribes associated summer and winter solstice rituals with the Twins' image [721, p. 82].

The fact that the Romans identified Janus with Quirinus enabled Huth to classify Janus as the god not only of time, but also of agriculture [721, p. 19]. The point is apparently that the Neolithic earth god, one of whose functions underlay the image of Quirinus, was pertinent to the counting of time. Saturn, an obvious image of the Neolithic earth god surviving until Roman times, was regarded by the Romans as the god of time, like Janus. This feature of evolution, suggests that his duality, which could originally have expressed the deity's ability to sway both in the underworld and in heaven, was in the course

of time applied to the two halves of the year.

O. Huth points out that the name Janus is etymologically associated with the notion "go, move." The ancient symbol of footprints is, he thinks, Janus' symbol. Shoes are an attribute of funerals and weddings in popular rites [721, pp. 25, 48, 78]. This seems to be because the earth god was the lord of the world of the dead and the patron of conception; Janus, too, conforms to these duties. In addition, he was associated with seafaring vessels, boats [721, p. 29]. Similarly, in Scandinavian mythology, the thundergod Fro has a magic ship. During the Neolithic, a boat symbolized the movement of the sun westwards; according to an Egyptian myth the sun within a boat sails along subterranean waters from west to east at night. Thus vessels were associated with the flow of time. For this reason, Janus, who personified time, was also associated with vessels. Apparently, since Janus was associated with walking and seafaring, he later became the patron of travelers and seafarers. This is also characteristic of the Twins.

In line with the data adduced, the image of Janus was associated with the summer solstice. But when in Ancient Rome the year was decreed to begin on the 1st of January, the first month of the year was named in his honor. Quite possibly the winter solstice was already associated earlier with Janus in popular traditions. There is evidence that the months following the summer and winter solstices had identical names. July, the month following the summer solstice, was named in honor of Julius Caesar; it is possible, however, that the name existed before in archaic tradition.¹⁹⁹ In the Scandinavian folk calendar, the winter solstice, or the period following it, was called *joel* [489a, pp. 72, 73; 721, pp. 68, 69]. In some languages it was called *yole*, *yuul* [790, p. 228]. In Scotland, Christmas and Christmaste are called *yule*. Thus the identical names for the beginnings of the two halves of the year, in winter (*joel*, *yole*, *yuul*, *yule*) and in summer (July), and identical signs for the winter and summer solstices again bear witness that time was once counted by half-years and the image of Janus was associated with the division of the year into two halves.

The images of the Twins and Janus are clearly related. Both represent two halves of the year and personify divine powers well disposed toward humans. However, their relation to the measurement of time seems to be more recent. It seems that the earth god was the prototype for Janus, and the Twins were his children. As far back as the Neolithic, the properties of the earth god were attributed to his sons (Ram, Deer, the Twins). As time went on and memory of the initial character of these mythological personages faded, their former images experienced deformations and the characteristics of the one were transferred more extensively to the other.

One can encounter designs of a pair of horse heads or protomes of other animals facing in opposite directions on Daghestanian decorative artifacts. This motif was widespread in the ancient, medieval, and more recent folk

¹⁹⁹This is not the only example: the month of August is believed to have been named after Emperor Augustus, however, the Hebrew name for this month, *av*, assimilated from Babylon, is much older.

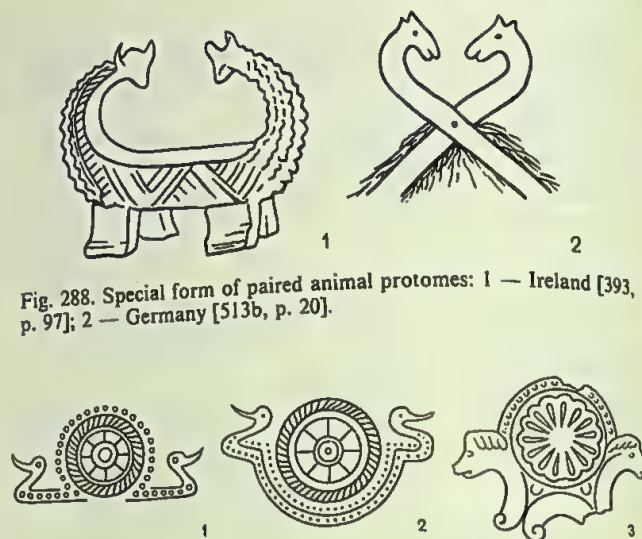


Fig. 288. Special form of paired animal protomes: 1 — Ireland [393, p. 97]; 2 — Germany [513b, p. 20].



Fig. 289. Paired birds or horses with pseudo-sun: 1 — Hungary, ca 800 BC [618g, pl. 54]; 2 — Denmark, ca 1500 BC [659b, p. 427]; 3 — Crimea, ca 300 CE [208b, p. 49].

art of Western Asia, the Mediterranean, Western Europe, Russia, and the Caucasus, reaching China [371a, p. 172] and pre-Columbian America (Fig. 287: 11). It came into being as early as the Paleolithic (Fig. 287: 8).

In the Bronze Age, the horse and the bird were considered incarnations of the solar deity; if so, two horse or bird heads would symbolize two suns. Protomes facing in opposite directions and swastikas with their ends turned in opposite directions could symbolize the mythical movement of the sun, half a year to the north and half a year to the south. This could also be the meaning of the decorative motif of two horned animal heads facing in opposite directions. From the point of view of Neolithic, and quite possibly, Paleolithic beliefs, the opposing heads of snakes, bulls, rams (Fig. 287: 3, 6, 7), and wild boars [371a, p. 172] could be double symbols of the earth god, while opposing heads of birds combined with a comb (Fig. 287: 10) could be a double symbol of the heaven goddess.

Alongside images of two animals facing in opposite directions, were images of two animals facing each other (Fig. 344, etc.). It was probably a mutual influence between these two variants which produced a design in the form of two animals with opposing bodies and facing heads (Fig. 288).

Thus, opposing horse or bird heads were common in ancient symbolism. They were sometimes combined with a solar symbol (Fig. 289).²⁰⁰ The resulting three-member composition must have symbolized the movement of the sun alternately in one and the other direction. It should, however, be pointed out that this design was borrowed from Neolithic symbolism; in those times, the disk represented the heaven goddess and the two flanking creatures were, in all probability, the Twins, the goddess' children.

It was mentioned above that as far back as the Neolithic a cult-mythological image of a boat was associated with

²⁰⁰Most of these representations were of waterfowl; the spring and fall migrations of the birds were apparently associated with the annual movements of the sun.

solar movement. Clay models of boats dating from pre-Indo-European times have been found in Crete [867, p. 151]. Similar artifacts continued in use during the Bronze Age (Fig. 290: 2), although by then they were associated with other religious conceptions. The boat was now represented with bird or horse protomes at each end, presumably symbolizing the movement of the sun, now in one direction and now in the opposite. Sometimes snake protomes appeared (Fig. 290: 7); this did not conform to the new religious principles, but was a heritage of the time when images of underworld creatures were fixed on the bow images of underworld-bound boat. Real sailing vessels did not usually have such protomes; if they did [771, pp. 194, 260], it was under the influence of cult-mythological, rather than purely aesthetic considerations.



Fig. 290. Sun chariot and sun boat, Bronze Age: 1 — Germany [646a, p. 205]; 2 — Hungary [658a, p. 355]; 3, 4 — Sweden [658a, p. 329]; 5 — Austria [719, p. 497]; 6 — Italy [658b, p. 100]; 7 — Denmark [719, p. 198].

It may be concluded from the above that a boat with two protomes, one in front and one at the back, symbolized the annual movement of the sun: "forward" (rising sun) and "backward" (setting sun).

This inference is supported by the design of another cult object (Fig. 290: 1) — a vehicle with a chalice in the middle (a fire representing the sun was probably lit inside it), and with opposing heads of birds on the sides (perhaps symbolizing the movement of the sun in opposite directions). The object shown in Figure 290: 1 is not unique; other similar objects are known [800b, pp. 178, 181].

Consequently, during the Bronze Age the symbol of two suns expressed the action of divine forces controlling the two half-year solar phases, and the Twins or Janus were incarnations of these forces.

Neolithic materials also contain data pointing to double symbols, with a different meaning during that period. Figure 291: 1, 2 shows similar designs from Tripolye, the difference between them being that the first has two dots, and the second four. The second of these designs was



Fig. 291. Two dots in Neolithic symbolism: 1, 2 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [696, p. 172]; 3 — Ancient Crete [676f, p. 490]; 4, 5 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [686, p. 113].

analyzed above and it was concluded that it expressed a notion associated with the heaven goddess. The meaning of the first design remains a matter of conjecture. One thing is certain: here, too, heaven was meant.

The two-dot sign can be observed on other objects of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture (Fig. 291: 4, 5), where in some cases it represents the goddess' eyes, while in others it appears in a different context. On a carved Cretan gemstone (Fig. 291: 3) two dots occur on the goddess' wings; this indicates that they do not represent objective reality, but are a conventional sign. Apparently, it expresses the idea of the goddess' dual nature. Double symbols of the deity have been noted repeatedly. Many more examples can be added.

An ancient Mexican design (Fig. 292: 13) exhibits a heaven symbol with two dots inside, which, in the Tripolye and Cretan examples, symbolizes the duality of heaven or of the heaven goddess (cf. Fig. 276: 5, 6). This design from pre-Columbian America has certain features which confirm the interpretation of the rosette, a toothed rosette in particular, as a heaven, but not solar, symbol: 1) the emblem is oval, not round in shape (cf. Fig. 36: 4); 2) there are no teeth but rather segments, designating clouds, along the circumference of the oval (cf. Fig. 24: 1); 3) there is a dot — a seed sign — inside the cloud sign (cf. Fig. 12).

The designs in Figure 292: 1-3 may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of two parts of heaven. Let us assume that these are the eastern and western parts (remember that "two horizons" is a typical epithet of the Egyptian heaven god Horus).

Other versions of the goddess' double signs indicate that this interpretation does not fully exhaust their semantics. A sequence of this type of emblem consists of two cloud signs (Fig. 292: 4-8). Others represent two heaven signs (Fig. 292: 9, 12). Ancient Roman designs show a priestess or the goddess holding the goddess' symbol — a disk, or

deities: Laturne Dane, the god of the lower universe, is the source of disease, death, bad weather, and earthquakes, his colors are black and red and his symbols are the moon and the snake; Lavalonga — the god of heaven, the source of good, was imaged as a bird. In Udmurtian mythology, Kyldysyn is a supreme god of a double nature, residing in heaven and under the ground. In Adygeian legends, Pako is the god of evil staying alternately on earth and in heaven [475b, p. 274]. The Sumerian god of the underworld and of fire, Nergal, according to the myth, initially dwelled in heaven, but descended to the underworld and remained there. Seneca calls the hereafter "the kingdom of Black Jupiter." Inscriptions on gravestones occasionally contain the expression "Black Zeus" [662, p. 70]. According to other sources, Hades, the god of the underworld, and the heaven god Zeus were perceived as two manifestations of



Fig. 295. Cult of double deity in various epochs: 1 — France, Paleolithic [826, p. 348]; 2 — France, Mesolithic [719, p. 135]; 3 — Rumania, Neolithic [666, pl. 171]; 4 — Sweden, Bronze Age [719, p. 235]; 5 — Southern Caucasus, Iron Age [176, p. 43].

the same deity; Hades was considered as "descending Zeus" [371a, p. 51]. The Sanskrit *svarga* ('heaven') probably derives from one of the widespread names for the Black God, *var/vel, bal/bel*. In the Sumerian language, *tingir* means 'river' and *dingir* 'god, heaven' [509, p. 241]; the similarity of these words may be accounted for by the fact that the god of the lower regions, associated with rivers and springs, could rise to the sky. The English word *deuce* means 'two,' it is also a substitute for 'devil'.

The idea of a dual deity or of antipode-deities runs through all ancient periods of human culture: evidence can be found in the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age (Fig. 295: 1-4). In Armenia, a model of a double temple was found at excavations (Fig. 295: 5). It is enclosed in a circle with dots along the circumference (a heaven symbol). The temple is two-storied and must have been meant for worshipping two manifestations of the deity, upper and lower.

Thousands of years went by. Ancient myths were forgotten, but fragmentary reminiscences of them remained. During the Middle Ages, people still remembered that the calf (bull) stayed both in heaven, above the world of people, and in the earth. A Russian riddle has it: "Two bulls butt each other, but never get together"; this is heaven and earth [200, p. 101]. And Omar Khayyam wrote:

One Bull hangs high in the heavens,
The other props up the earth.
But behold the multitude of donkeys
That Allah shepherds between the Bulls!

THE HOLY TRINITY

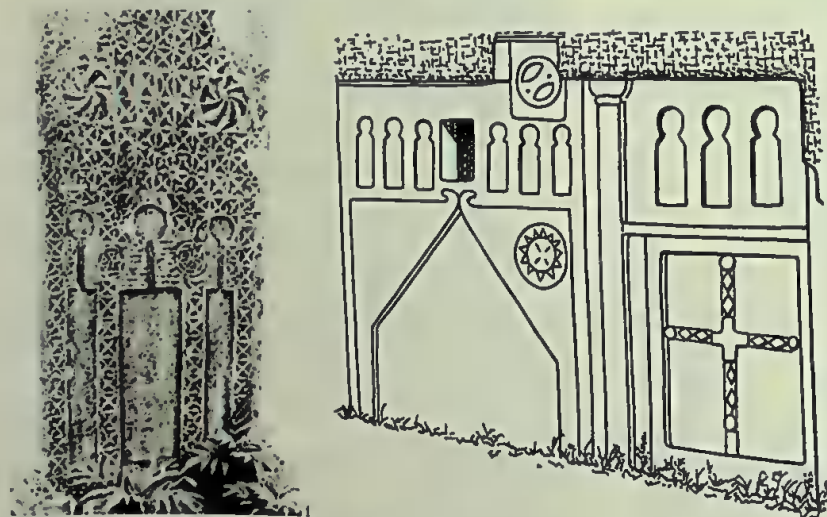


Fig. 296. Triple emblem of disk on pedestal: 1 — Daghestan, Khiv, 16th c.; 2 — Asia Minor, 9th c. [732, fig. 26]; 3 — Georgia, 8th c. [591, pl. 90].

We have discussed the Daghestan stelas depicting a triple emblem in the form of a rectangle with a disk above it (Fig. 174: 5-8), resembling a human silhouette. When there are

three such elements (Fig. 296: 1), the composition looks like a stylized representation of three human figures. This rather suggests that what one sees is an anthropomorphized Christian Trinity, especially since similar compositions are encountered on façades of medieval churches in Asia Minor (Fig. 296: 2).

Yet these are not human figures. The rectangle with a



Fig. 297. Stelas with three "suns" symbol in Daghestan: 1 — Shile; 2 — Kug; 3 — Shile; 4 — Tsanal.



Fig. 298. Three "suns" symbol: 1 — carved stone in mosque wall, Daghestan, Tsurayi; 2 — fragment of decoration on a ceramic dish, Daghestan, Ispik, 18th c. [585, p. 25]; 3 — France, ca 2000 BC [699a, p. 59]; 4 — Sweden, ca 1500 BC [771, p. 85]; 5 — Russia, 18th c.; 6 — highland Georgia, 19th c. [50, pl. 25]; 7 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [645b, pl. 19]; 8 — Crimea, ca 200 CE [218, p. 189]; 9 — Hungary, ca 2000 BC [679, p. 121]; 10-12 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [629, p. 72; 870, figs. 70, 71]; 13 — Ancient Mexico [750, pl. 33].



Fig. 299. Triple horseman: 1 — Italy, 1500 BC [646a, p. 200]; 2 — Celtic, 100 BC [733, p. 158].

disk is a cult emblem common in ancient times, a disk (a symbol of the sun or heaven) on a pedestal. Figure 296: 3 shows a different arrangement of three emblems representing a disk on a pedestal. Daghestanian stelae often display three disks on a single pedestal or without pedestal (Fig. 297).

These examples from the Middle Ages; they probably a heritage of conceptions typical of periods more recent than the Neolithic. In this case, the disk on a pedestal is a kind of sun icon, and three such elements are three solar symbols, or a symbol of three suns.

The three sun diagram is common in ancient and medieval monuments of Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia (Fig. 298). Like other sacred signs of the European and Western Asian complex, the symbol disseminated far beyond this region; it is even encountered in America (Fig. 298: 13). In pre-Columbian America, more specifically among the Incas, the sun was held to be triple [371a, p. 545].

The sign of three disks often occurs in combination with representations of a horse or rider (Fig. 298: 2-5). There are also images of triple riders (Fig. 299). In Russia, three wooden horses were sometimes placed on rooftops [70a, Table 5; 313, p. 181]. The image of a horse and rider personified the solar deity since the Bronze Age, so the triple figures may serve as additional evidence of the existence of the cult concept of "three suns."

Some of the graphemes in question, however, are of clearly Neolithic origin (Fig. 298: 7 — concentric circles; 298: 12 — concentric arches; 298: 9 — female breasts; 298: 10 — sown fields). Various three-element symbols existed during the Neolithic; they were later reinterpreted to fit new religious conceptions associated with the sun.

Tripartite graphemes of the Bronze and later periods

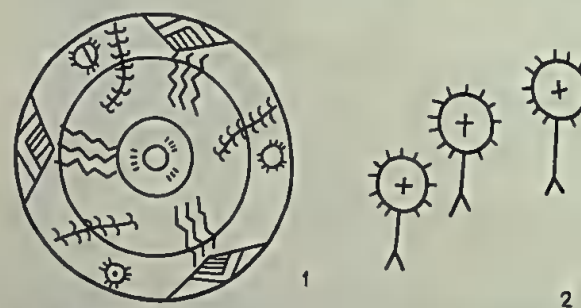


Fig. 300. Three "suns" calendar sign: 1 — Czechoslovakia, ca 500 BC [20, p. 32]; 2 — Central Asia, 2000 BC [114, p. 188].

suggest that the sign of three suns served as a symbolic designation of a three-year calendar cycle. The picture in Figure 300: 1 may be considered a graphic expression of the three-year cycle, since its elements (earth watered by rain) are all identical and the cycle is solar (for the disk was a solar symbol in the first millennium B.C.).

By that time, changes had also taken place in the structure of centric compositions. During the Neolithic (and sometimes during the Bronze Age as a survival) an earth sign was placed in the middle of a centric composition with heaven signs along the perimeter (Figs. 199: 12; 208: 9; 228: 11); this was reversed during the Bronze Age, as can be seen in Figure 300: 1.

In the mountains of Central Asia, near the Fergana Range, petroglyphs were found comprising a representation of three suns (Fig. 300: 2). They are carved on a rock the surface of which faces north and may be illuminated by sun beams only on the summer solstice day (the 23rd of June). There is no doubt that this served as a reference point for counting the calendar year, or three-year period. Y. Golendukhin, who published this design, believes that it expresses the notion of the three months needed for crops to ripen. This interpretation leaves unclear why the idea of crops ripening is confined to the northern side of a cliff which catches the sun on the summer solstice day. Further, Golendukhin writes that each of the three solar signs has 12 rays. As far as can be judged from the photograph, which is not distinctly reproduced, the third solar sign seems to have 13 rays. If this is so, we have a conventional representation of a three-year period in which the third year consists of 13 months. The solar year covers a little more than 12 lunar months, so that a thirteenth month had to be added to the third year to coordinate the lunar calendar with the solar one. This was, for instance, how the ancient Indian calendar was made [484, p. 134]. There is evidence that other Indo-European peoples also used this system of measuring time [131, p. 149]. The Ukrainians still remembered in the 19th

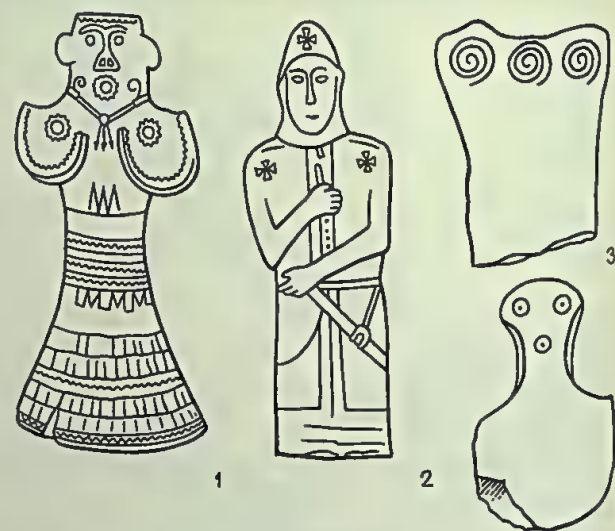


Fig. 301. Three "suns" sign on human figure: 1 — Yugoslavia, ca 1500 BC [626, pl. 61]; 2 — Northwestern Caucasus, ca 1000 CE [445, p. 200]; 3 — Greece, ca 2000 BC [719, p. 55]; 4 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [830, p. 107].

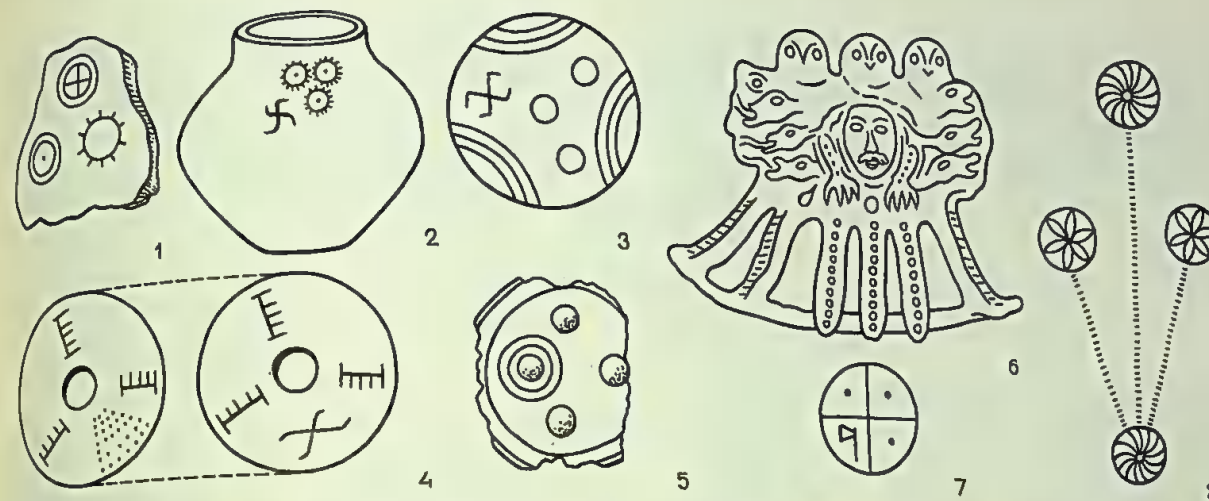


Fig. 302. Symbols of triple-and-single deity: 1 — Scotland, Neolithic [856, p. 157]; 2 — Denmark, Bronze Age [628, p. 81]; 3, 4 — Troy [870, fig. 65; 827, pl. 23]; 5 — Azerbaijan, ca 1000 BC [264, p. 131]; 6 — Volga region, ca 500 BC [531, p. 106]; 7 — France, ca 100 BC [733, p. 157]; 8 — design on a tomb stela, 19th c., Daghestan, Kug.

century that a certain year consisted of thirteen months and that it was considered unlucky, fatal [438, p. 208]. In Russia the leap year was believed likely to bring bad luck, and the 29th of February was perceived as a dangerous day; it was better to stay indoors on that day, lest an accident happen. The Russians thought St. Kasian, whose day was the 29th of February, was evil, responsible for high winds, herd diseases, and other misfortunes [310, p. 61]. It is possible that the Christian saint Kasian was originally related to the Neolithic underworld god, also considered the cause of high winds, animal epidemics, and other troubles.

Perhaps the three year calendar cycle with a leap year existed as far back as the Neolithic? There are no data to support such an assumption. The introduction of an additional 29th day in February to coordinate the four year calendar cycle with solar time is a comparatively recent innovation²⁰³; besides, it concerns a different calendar system, in which the leap year occurs every fourth and not third year, with 366 days and not 13 months. Yet, there must be a connection between the notion of leap year and Neolithic conceptions. So far, it is not clear what this connection is.

At all events, some three-stage, if not three-year, cycle must have existed in the Neolithic. This is indicated by the triple symbols of the earth god and heaven goddess.

The three suns designating the three year calendar period must have been associated in the minds of ancient people with some deity responsible for this order. A Bronze Age idol (Fig. 301: 1) found in Yugoslavia is of interest in this respect: there are designations of three suns on it. Quite probably it is an image of the deity of the three year cycle. This conclusion is based on the fact that the idol was made during the Bronze Age. But since the statuette portrays a female, the image is a heritage of the Neolithic.

²⁰³ An extra day every four years was proposed by Egyptian astronomers in the third century B.C. and was adopted in Rome in the first century C.E.

There may be other interpretations of statuettes with three signs having solar or other connotations (Fig. 301: 3, 4). It was remarked above that the sign of two little circles was reinterpreted as the two eyes of a deity (Fig. 278). In a similar way, the sign of three little circles was sometimes perceived as three eyes (Fig. 301: 4). This gave the Greeks occasion to picture Zeus and the Hindus Varuna as three-eyed. Three crosses, a symbol of three suns or a triple symbol of the earth god, were marked on people's garments (Fig. 301: 2).

Some ancient graphemes express the unity of the trinity. In the design discussed above, representing a three-year cycle (Fig. 300: 1), three solar signs, different in form, surround a central one that has three bunches of rays and probably incarnates the unity of a deity manifested alternately in three states. These three variants of solar symbols resemble three signs pertaining to the Neolithic period (Fig. 302: 1), but in that case we are dealing with three states of the goddess. The design in Figure 302: 2 is from the Bronze Age, and therefore expresses the triplicity of the one sun. During the Neolithic period, such a grapheme (Fig. 302: 3) must have expressed the idea of three states of the goddess relating to the earth god. The corresponding idea may be related to both variants of the design shown in Figure 302: 4. A cult object (Fig. 302: 6) dating from the first millennium B.C., found in the Volga region, should be understood, in line with conceptions of that period, as a symbol of the triune solar deity; an identical image dating from the Neolithic would have designated the threefold Great Goddess in association with the Great God. The Daghestanian design shown in Figure 302: 8 may express the idea of the triune heaven or the triune sun.

The widespread sign of the cross with four dots between the arms (Fig. 182) expressed the concept of the "four regions of the earth." But there was a similar sign with dots in only three of the interarm sectors. The earliest specimen, found in Asia Minor, is from the sixth millennium B.C. (Fig. 218: 2). Perhaps this grapheme conveys the notion of the triplicity of the earth god in time, and the quadruplicity of the terrestrial world in space. This symbol, though not very common, persisted over thousands of years. In addition to the above example, we can see it on a Celtic coin, in a Georgian folk ornament, and in Daghestan (Fig. 218: 1, 3, 4).

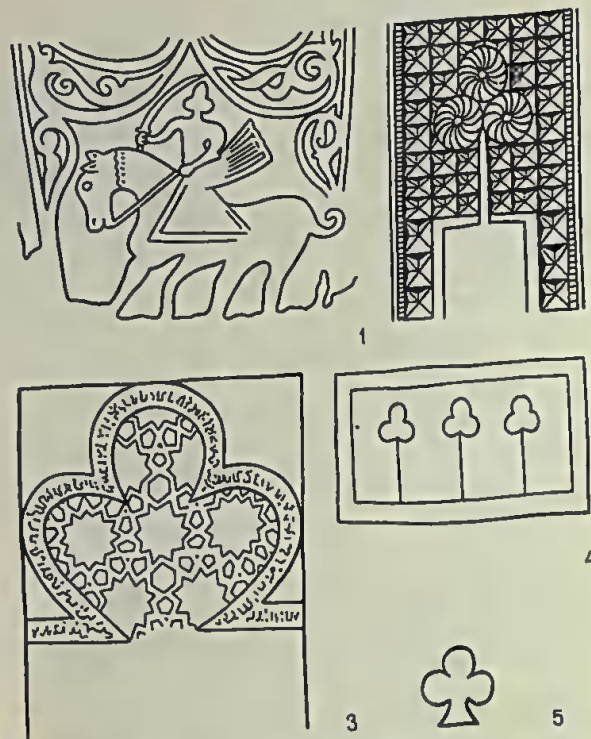


Fig. 303. Image and symbols of three-in-one deity: 1 — fragment of 16th c. tomb stela, Daghestan, Kalakoreish [235, p. 133]; 2 — fragment of 19th c. tomb stela, Daghestan, Kug; 3 — detail of ornamentation of mosque wall, Turkey [623, pl. 64]; 4 — detail of an altar at the foot of Mount Ararat [48, pl. 2]; 5 — element of folk ornament, Georgia [306, p. 152].

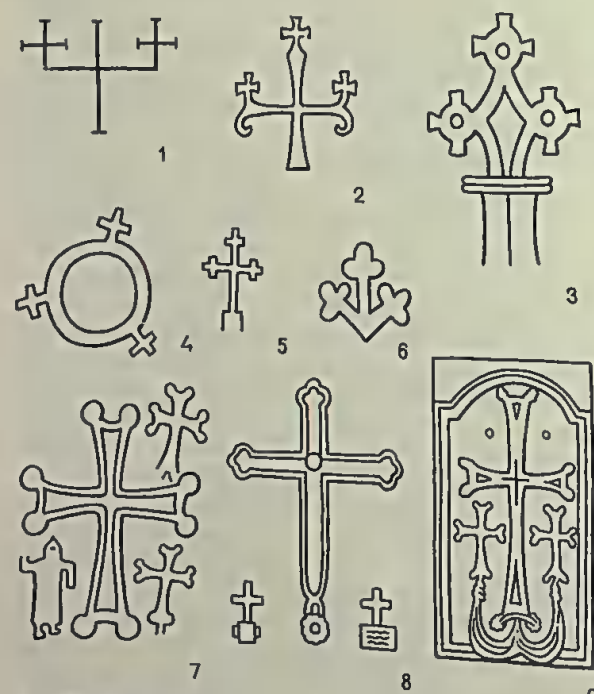


Fig. 304. Sign of three crosses in Caucasus: 1, 2 — carved stones in Urada and Machada, Daghestan; 3 — Koban culture, ca 1000 BC [646c, pl. 16]; 4, 5 — signs on a medieval tomb, Northeastern Caucasus [269, fig. 18]; 6 — element of Ossetian embroidery [574, pl. 27]; 7 — carved stone, Azerbaijan; 8 — fragment of a church façade, Georgia, 18th c.; 9 — stela in Armenia, 13th c.

The idea of the triune deity underlies some pagan rites. When celebrating the festival of the Trinity, the Ingushes brought three loaves of bread and one triangular flat cake from each household for a collective feast [12, p. 359]. The Ossets baked one big pie and three small ones for the Christmas holidays [582, p. 62]. "In Slavonia, when a family assembles for supper on Christmas Eve, the head of the family, before the blessing, kindles a large wax candle and then three smaller ones. The large candle is called "unity," the smaller ones "trinity" [434, p. 4].

The triunity of the deity was also designated symbolically by a combination of three clustered rosettes (Fig. 303: 2). This figure was a venerated cult symbol; later, when its meaning, like others, was forgotten, it came to be used as a decorative motif (Fig. 303: 3, 5).

There is an interesting Daghestanian representation of a winged rider with a triple head (Fig. 303: 1). The Rig-Veda mentions one Trisiros ("three-headed") [542, p. 43]. Medieval chronicles tell of a three-headed god of the Baltic Slavs called Triglav, who was visualized as a rider [541, p. 25].

A three-headed serpent figures in Indo-European legends; Triton of Greek myths is a triple underworld god. Eastern and southern Slavs had legends about a certain mythological personage named Troyan. Ukrainian legends mention Troyan's, or Zmiev's (Serpent's) rampart. A. Afanasiev believed that Troyan in *The Lay of Igor's Host* was the same as Triglav, for, according to Serbian tradition, Troyan was three-headed [40b, p. 643]. In the chapter "Labyrinth" we suggested that Troyan was the Neolithic underworld god whose image survived in the cult-mythological conceptions of later periods. The three-headed rider is not a sun god, since his horse is black [200, p. 35; 739, p. 223]. Traditions have it that Troyan travels at night, avoiding daylight.

There is some evidence to show that alongside the image of a three-in-one earth-god there was the notion of a triple heaven goddess. The more recent triple sun god (if this image really existed) was a reinterpretation of these more archaic images.

If the cross is a solar symbol, the sign of three crosses must be a symbol of a "trisolar god"; such an emblem is known in Daghestan and other parts of the Caucasus (Fig. 304). Three crosses, however, may be interpreted otherwise — as a symbol of a triple earth god, which survived since Neolithic times. The design of a circle and three adjacent crosses (Fig. 304: 4) expresses the union of the heaven goddess and the tripartite earth god.

In making predictions for the coming year, pagan priests in Chechenia used symbolism: three crosses meant a successful year, two crosses neither very good nor very bad, and one cross warned of a bad year [115, p. 253]. The meaning of the cross cannot be inferred from this ritual. In other cases three crosses appear as a symbol pertaining to the notion of the earth. The Ossets had the following custom: "On finishing the plowing, the plowman broke the whip he used for driving the bulls, into six pieces, and made three crosses out of them, which he planted in the middle of the tilled plot" [582, p. 121]. In Poland, too, peasants stuck three little crosses in their fields in spring [228b, p. 210]. If the cross was perceived as a solar symbol, the sign of three crosses would be understood as a symbol

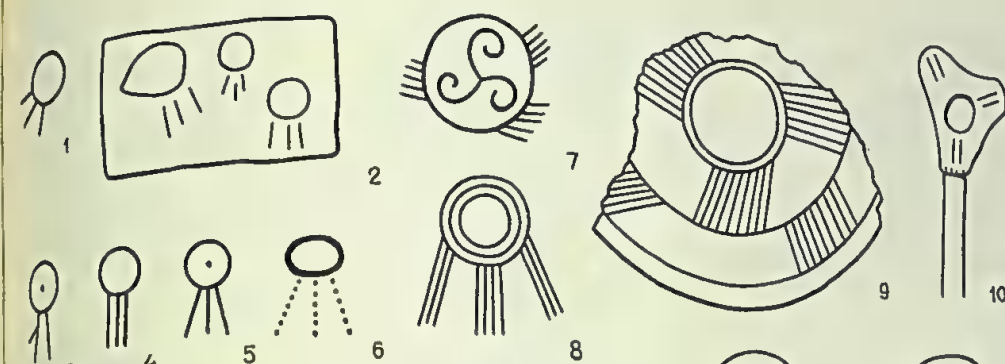


Fig. 305. Pseudo-sun with three rays: 1 — rock wall drawing, Daghestan, near Anada; 2 — signs on wall of Derbent fortress, Daghestan, near Anada; 3 — Azerbaijan, Middle Ages [146, p. 22]; 4 — Sweden, 14th c. [39]; 5, 6 — Ancient Egypt [616, p. 44]; 7 — Bronze Age [290a, p. 88]; 8 — Italy, Neolithic [839, p. 280]; 9 — Northern Black Sea region, ca 2500 BC (Kurgan culture) [285, p. 113]; 10 — France, Paleolithic [782a, pl. 84].

of the triune sun, and the whole magic performance could express a wish for a successful union between the solar father god and mother earth.

One of the idols referred to above wears a necklace with a pendant in the form of three arrows (Fig. 301: 1). There are different ways of interpreting this sign: in Indo-European myths the spear or arrow symbolizes the sun god, and in the Neolithic religion the earth god. The grapheme of a circle with three arrows (Fig. 361: 2) could designate the "triune sun" or express the idea of the relationship between the goddess and the whole earth god.

In ancient Georgian designs depicting a horse before an altar with the goddess' emblem (Fig. 363: 3), there are three protuberances on the horse's mane. Sh. Amiranashvili, who published this picture, thinks the protuberances symbolize solar rays [21, p. 86]; however, he does not support his statement with argumentation. If the horse symbolizes the sun, the three protuberances may express the trinity of the solar deity. But the image of the horse was also originally associated with Neolithic beliefs, largely preserved during the post-Neolithic period. The horse's neck is arched, and the sign in the form of an arc with three bulges (Fig. 116: 9) is a symbol of the triple heaven-goddess, for the arc is one of her emblems.

There are many examples of the symbol in the form of a disk with three rays or three fascicles of rays (Fig. 305). In Ancient Egypt, during the historic period (i.e., that which left written documents), the circle with a dot inside symbolized the sun; consequently, such a sign with three rays (Fig. 305: 5) must also have symbolized the sun. However, no information has reached us on the meaning of the solar sign with three rays. A variant of this sign was known in Egypt — with an oval (Fig. 305: 6). But the oval symbolized heaven and not the sun. Concentric circles with three bunches of rays (Fig. 305: 8) should be considered as a heaven sign and three signs of rain. Another disk with three bunches of rays (Fig. 305: 7) is also a symbol of the heaven goddess, because it dates back to the Neolithic. The sign within it, known as a triquetra, is, as will be shown later, a symbol of the earth god; therefore, the entire design is an ideograph expressing the union of the triple goddess and the triple god.

The use of the symbol in the form of a disk with



Fig. 306. Triple symbols of female deity: 1, 2 — Italy, Bronze Age [772, pls. 19, 8]; 3 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 387]; 4, 5 — Mesopotamia, Neolithic [772, pls. 19, 8]; 6 — Mesopotamia, Neolithic [772, pls. 19, 8]; 7 — Assyria [756, p. 9]; 8 — Germany, Roman period [701, fig. 163]; 9 — Scotland [756, p. 153]; 10 — Elam, ca 3000 BC [800, p. 188]; 11, 12 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [361, p. 153; 827, pl. 91]; 13 — Ancient Crete [867, p. 769].

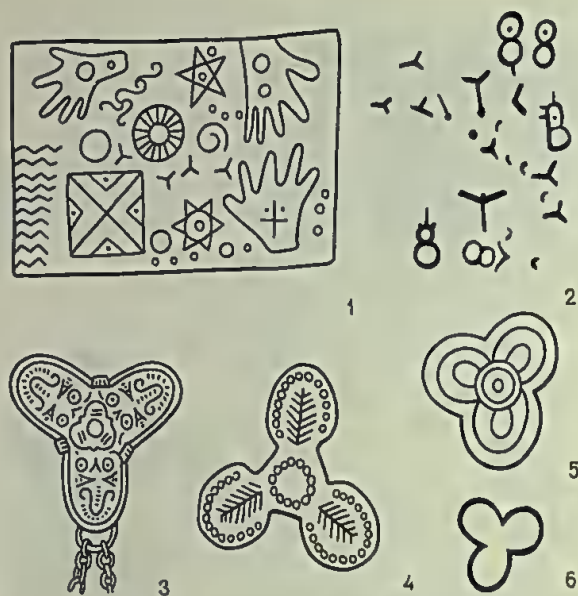


Fig. 307. Three-pointed sign: 1 — Daghestan, Tlyakh [376, p. 271]; 2 — Armenia, rock wall paintings [340, p. 6]; 3 — Karelia, Bronze Age [80, pl. 1]; 4 — North Ossetia, 1000 BC [537, pl. 125]; 5 — Hungary, Bronze Age [694, p. 209]; 6 — pre-Aryan India [97, pl. 4].

three bunches of rays by tribes belonging to the Ancient Kurgan culture, i.e., by Proto-Indo-Europeans (Fig. 305: 9), must be due to the influence of early farmer cultures. By that time, i.e., in the third millennium B.C., Proto-Indo-Europeans had already arrived deep within the Balkans and Asia Minor, territories inhabited by early farming tribes, so that symbols could have been borrowed by the settlers of the Northern Black Sea region not necessarily from ethnically alien tribes, but directly from Indo-Europeanized ethnic communities which had assimilated graphic symbols together with other elements of culture from their autochthonous ancestors. But how was this grapheme perceived by the Proto-Indo-European tribes which populated the Northern Black Sea region in the third millennium B.C. — as a symbol of the sun god or the heaven goddess? There is no answer to this question. Four thousand years later traces of sun worship and survivals of beliefs going back to the early farmer religion could both be discerned in customs of the Slavs and other Indo-European peoples of Eastern Europe. A final remark to conclude the analysis of the symbol composed of a circle with three fascicles of rays: it existed as far back as the Paleolithic (Fig. 305: 10).

Archaeological finds in Europe and Western Asia furnish many examples of triple symbols of the goddess. These may be signs of heaven (Fig. 306: 1, 2), signs of the cloud (Fig. 306: 3-5), signs of rain or water (Fig. 306: 6-12), or votive columns (Fig. 306: 13). The three-pointed sign (Fig. 307) also seems to fall within this category.

The trident, too, is a symbol of the threefold deity (Fig. 308: 1). This sign could not have derived from a representation of the trident weapon; this is shown by the fact that the corresponding cult object sometimes had obtuse rather than pointed ends (Fig. 308: 6) or else sinuous prongs (Fig. 308: 2, 3).

A trident with lateral ends curved back was found in

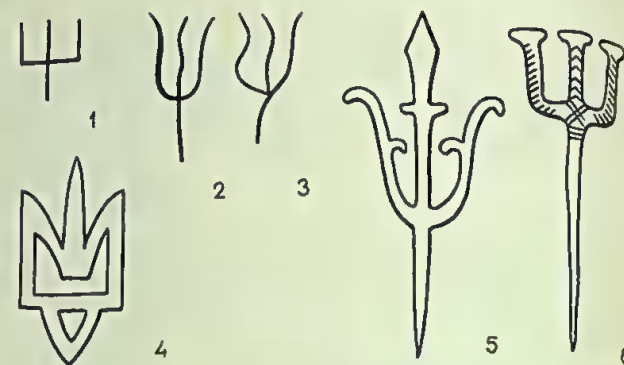


Fig. 308. Trident: 1 — sign on a Bronze Age object from Greece [824, p. 671], on ancient pottery from Western Europe [859, p. 33], and in North Ossetia [41, p. 129]; 2 — Hittite [631, p. 238]; 3 — Babylon [863, pl. 118]; 4 — medieval Russia; 5 — Northern Caucasus, 500 BC [408b, p. 44]; 6 — Central Caucasus, ca 1200 BC [517, p. 27].

the Northern Caucasus (Fig. 308: 5). The published report of this find suggested that the object was a spear provided with hooks for pulling an enemy out of the saddle. It would seem that an implement like a gaff might be more suitable for such an operation; moreover, had a weapon in the form of a spear with hooks actually existed in ancient times, the fact would have had numerous confirmations. B. Rybakov has shown that the object served as a top of a flagstaff [464, p. 242].

The oldest known trident sign is shown in Figure 358: 8. It appears in the same place on a female statuette as other symbols of the goddess during the Neolithic — water, rain, and the Tree of Life (Fig. 358: 2-7). It seems that this trident is a sign of rain (Fig. 7: 2), reduced to three elements in conformity with the concept of the goddess' trinity. It is possible that the image of a three-fingered hand, probably originating from the representation of a bird's foot (Fig. 333), played a role in the genesis of the trident sign. The trident was depicted over the goddess' head as one of her emblems (Fig. 342). Appearing between two swastikas (Fig. 235: 7) it is a sign of the goddess between two male signs, as when the goddess was placed between two male figures (Fig. 340).

A mythical female creature of southern Slavs, an analogue of the eastern Slavic *rusalka* (mermaid), was called *vila*. The *vila* or *rusalka* is an abased image of the Neolithic goddess preserved in popular memory. Let us assume that this goddess was referred to as *Vila*²⁰⁴ by certain tribes in the remote past. The three-pointed sign could then be called the sign of *Vila* or simply *vila*. It resembles a pitchfork or fork; hence presumably the Russian words *vily* ('pitchfork') and *vilka* ('fork').

The English word *fork* also owes its origin to mythological conceptions, but it is connected with the image of the earth god rather than the heaven goddess. One of the names of the thundergod was *Forcus*, also known as *Fjörgynn*. The Latin *furca* means "two-pronged pitchfork," which resembles a pair of horns; in Old English this word also designated a bifurcated snake tongue.

²⁰⁴ This assumption can be corroborated by the fact that one of the common names of the goddess' consort was a word with the root consonants *v.l.*



Fig. 309. Triple symbols of male deity: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, pl. 40]; 2, 3 — Ancient Crete [839, p. 252]; 4 — Mycenae, ca 1500 [676e, p. 242]; 5 — North American Indian [750, pl. 32]; 6 — Yugoslavia, ca 6000 BC [696, p. 151]; 7, 8 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC [849, pl. 79; 676f, p. 665]; 9 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [716, p. 53]; 10 — Hungary, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 173]; 11 — Scandinavia, ca 100 CE [822, p. 73].

The trident with sinuous prongs is a III-shaped sign of rain where rain is designated by wavy lines serving as an ideograph for water, rather than straight lines. But while such a symbol was originally an emblem of the heaven deity, in the course of time it began to be correlated with the thundergod (for example the Hurrian-Hittite Teshub, see Fig. 334: 1, the Aramaic Haddad [730, p. 29], and so on). This understanding of the symbol might be due to the fact that the wavy line was an ideograph not only of water, but also of the snake and, consequently, of lightning. The trident made up of wavy lines resembles lightning forking forward.

Thus, the trident could serve both as a symbol of the heaven goddess (during the Neolithic) and of the thundergod (during the Bronze Age).

There were many and varied triple signs of the Neolithic male deity. The earth god could be represented by the triple serpent (Fig. 309: 2-5) or he-goat (Fig. 309: 9). The sphere dominated by this god was represented by an "underworld creature," such as the deer (Fig. 309: 10), or an incarnation of terrestrial vegetation, the ram (Fig. 309: 6, 7). There is an image of a three-horned bull in Celtic legends [814, p. 303].

The Bible says that the people must appear before God

three times a year. According to a Christian tradition, the Virgin Mary mourns three times a year [790, p. 294]. According to Mahabharata, a horse must be sacrificed once every four months, i.e., three times a year [97, p. 281]. It is possible that the year was divided into three seasons during the early farming period, although there was also a division into two parts. In any case, the division of the year into three parts is recorded in cultures that largely preserved archaic traditions, such as those of the Copts, or the pre-Aryan Indians who symbolized the three-season year as a disk divided into three sectors, resembling a wheel with three spokes [96: pp. 56, 57]. According to the Rig-Veda, the year was divided into two halves and also into three seasons [614, p. 32]. A Greek myth relates that Persephone, the spouse of the underworld god Hades, spent one-third of the year underground and the remaining two-thirds on the earth, or on Olympus.

The assumption that the Neolithic religion had a notion of three annual phases of the heaven goddess and the earth god is based on the rudimentary evidence of annual festival rites inherited from the early farming period. True, these data do not produce a distinct picture, not only because the vestiges of ancient rites surviving through strata of thousands of years of domination by other religions are fragmentary, but also because the rites could differ semantically. If the year was divided into two, three, or four parts (and the division into two parts was shown above to be different in different cases), there must have been many boundaries between these parts in the course of a year; besides, there could have been rites dedicated to the high point of a period, not only its beginning or end.

The funeral of a female effigy, a popular European rite, was performed three times: at Christmastide (the end of December and beginning of January), Shrovetide (the second half of February), and Whitsunday (the end of May). The month of May was the time when the spring manifestation of the goddess was glorified (it was therefore named after the Roman goddess Maia). Rituals observed in popular cultures began with May Day festivities involving the characteristic accessories for honoring the goddess, such as setting up a ritual tree, weaving wreaths, decorating dwellings with green branches, and so forth. At the end of dwellings was Whitsunday or — in Russia — the *rusalii*, festive rites dedicated to a *Rusalka*. The horse was prominent in the rites of the May *rusalii*. Perhaps, it represented the goddess' partner, the underworld god. There was a Hungarian custom of selecting a "king" and "queen" on Whitsunday [228b, p. 200].

Eastern Slavs have a festival called "semik" (from the word "seven").²⁰⁵ It nearly coincides with Whitsunday and may have originated in the same pagan festival which was transformed into the Christian Whitsunday. The "semik" coincides in time with the mentioned rite of "Yarila's funeral" and the *rusalii* festival. The "semik" does not belong solely to the Slavs: in Ancient Rome the festival of Vesta was celebrated at the same period, and food eaten then was heavily salted (salt being an attribute of the Great Goddess).

²⁰⁵ Because it takes place seven weeks after Easter.

The Jews celebrate the Shavuoth holidays at that time of the year. The word *shavuoth* means 'weeks' or 'sevens.' Fifty days, or the seven-week period between Passover and the Semik/Shavuoth may be explained as an esoteric idea of the number seven. Nothing, however, suggests that the number seven was sacred in the religion of early farmers. In Russia, the day of the Holy Trinity was called *Pyatidesyatnitsa* (from "fifty") and in Western Europe — Pentecost. Five was a sacred number in the early farmers' religion: it was a numerical symbol of the goddess. It is possible that during the Neolithic these holidays were separated by 50, not seven times seven days.

The ancient Hebrews apparently considered the number 50 to be sacred. This follows not only from the time term noted, but also from the fact that the fiftieth year is believed to be extraordinary. It is called Yovel (Ywvl). It is interesting that the Hebrew for ■ spring (water source) sounds very much the same: *yuvāl* (ywvl).

In the Jewish tradition, the 50 days from Passover to Shavuoth are a period with mournful connotations, as is the case among other nations. Shavuoth combines elements of monotheistic Judaism and certain ancient rites whose origin has been forgotten. These include, for example, offerings of fruit and flowers (in some Jewish communities flowers are presented to newlyweds on this day), songs about marriage (in ancient times maidens sang and danced in circles, and in their songs invited young men to marry them); it is customary to eat farinaceous foods (an attribute of the Great God) and dairy products (milk being an attribute of the Great Goddess); in Ancient Israel, dancing and music accompanied people on their way to the temple; it was common practice to wear white garments and crown one's head with a wreath, the color of white and the ring being symbols of the goddess.

The Slavic "semik" is ■ specifically women's festival. Girls dress in their best clothes, sing and dance in circles, and decorate ■ birch tree with ribbons and houses with birch branches. Perhaps the end of May terminated the yearly three-stage cycle of the goddess by the early farmers' calendar. At any rate, the origin of the festival and the very concept of the Trinity are linked with the triple nature of the Neolithic goddess.

The image of the triune goddess emerged as far back as the Paleolithic, to judge by a representation of three female figures, the belly of each one shaped like a disk with a dot in the center [733, p. 146]. An ancient Egyptian picture pertaining to the triune goddess was described as follows: "The priest and his wife place offerings on three altars before three cows. The cows have crowns on their heads. The three crowns are dissimilar" [251, p. 16].

There is a triple goddess in the Celtic tradition [814, pp. 206-209]. Rudiments of the image of the triple goddess were preserved in Greek mythology: three Moiras, three Graces, three Parcae, three female deities of the seasons, and three goddesses judged by Paris. Athene was called Tritogeneia (thrice born), Hecate was portrayed tripartite. J. Przyłuski interprets the image of the triple goddess as a symbolization of the idea "birth, life, death" [802, p. 173]; this interpretation is not, however, supported by argument. Written documents and archeological evidence

Written documents and archeological evidence point to a persisting notion of the earth god's triparticity. The oldest

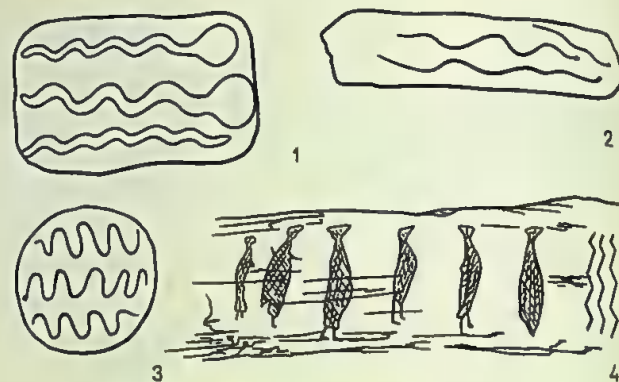


Fig. 310. Three snakes symbol: 1 — Siberia, Paleolithic [111, pl. 11]; 2 — Ingushetia, 1700 [266, p. 189]; 3 — Iran, ca 1000 BC [14, pl. 49]; 4 — Denmark, Mesolithic [381a, p. 189].

is a well known Paleolithic representation of three snakes (Fig. 310: 1). This image passes through all subsequent periods; it is encountered in monuments of Mesolithic Europe, ancient Western Asia, and the medieval Caucasus (Fig. 310: 2-4). It must have expressed some essential ancient religious conception. Three snakes are mentioned in song on Ivan-Kupala Day [198, p. 233], a festivity involving attributes of veneration of the earth god. According to a myth recorded in Northwest Africa, the world was created by the splitting of a giant egg containing a triple snake [527, p. 97]. A three-headed serpent with characteristics of the underworld deity is a frequent personage of fairy tales and legends. On a ninth century idol found in the Zbruch River (the Ukraine), the lower part, apparently representing the lower world, is decorated with three male images (although the pillar has four sides) [129]. In the Ukraine one could hear about the "old rye man" who was pictured with three heads and three tongues [129, p. 285]. The Chechenian and Ingushian supreme god, creator of the world, Däla, was pictured with three faces. Ancient portrayals of a three-faced male head are known in Western Europe [814, pp. 76, 79]. Three-headed mythological images have already been mentioned: the Indian Trisiros, Greek Triton, and Slavic Triglav or Troyan. Geryon in Greek mythology is a three-headed giant dwelling on a Red Island somewhere in the west. Southern Caucasian Aeneolithic (third millennium B.C.) monuments include cult fireplaces with three compartments; objects for worshipping a male deity were found in the vicinity of these fireplaces [170, p. 226]. In Roman times, amulets in the form of a triple, as well as double, phallus were common [39, Figs. 56, 57, 319].

There is a Sumerian triad of supreme deities: Anu (the heaven god), Enlil (the god of atmospheric elements), and Enki (the god of earth and water), each having traits of the Neolithic Great God. Zeus fulfilled three functions in Crete and the Aegean Sea islands: he was god of heaven, water, and earth [728, p. 4].²⁰⁶ Similarly, Agni resided in three spheres: heaven, water and earth; moreover, he was "thrice born" [614, p. 28]. A Roman myth tells about the "triple life" of Mars [664, p. 244], who is originated

²⁰⁶ See chapter "The White God" on what was common between Zeus and the Neolithic god.

Let us look at three snakes in a Paleolithic design in Figure 310: 1. One has a large head, the second a smaller one, and the third no head at all. This could be an illustration of the earth god's three annual phases: summer and autumn when he is in his prime, spring (youth), and winter (inertness). Incidentally, war was not waged in Ancient Rome in winter: Mars was "asleep" during that time.

The available data are insufficient to allow definitive demarcations between the three periods of the earth god's annual cycle. Perhaps annual festivals marked by bonfires should be taken as starting points? Ritual fires were lit during the winter and summer solstices, on Shrovetide or the beginning of Lent, during Easter, on the eve of All Saints Day (a Christian festival at the turn of October and November commemorating the dead), at Christmastide (the twelfth day after Christmas), and on St. George's Day. Most of these moments are not characterized by seasonal changes in weather, so the bonfire ritual proper cannot be regarded as marking the deity's transition from one state to another.

Quirinus was a major deity in the early stage of Roman history; he was later considered a patron of economic activity. O. Huth demonstrates that Quirinus of the Sabines corresponds to Mars of the Latinians [721, p. 34]. His characteristics (patron of agriculture with a chthonic character and militancy) would make Quirinus a former earth god. The dates of the cult observances dedicated to him were: the 15th and 23rd of December (coinciding with the beginning and end of the saturnalia, i.e., the festival of Saturn, also a former earth god); the 17th of February (coinciding with the Carnival, Shrovetide or Maslenitsa); the 20th—21st of August (during the period of harvesting, the height of summer, when the eastern Slavs marked the day of St. Elias or of Perun, the 20th of July [467, p. 73]; Elias/Perun was the thundergod, that is the earth god). If we add to this list the celebration in honor of George or Yarila in April, the day of remembering the dead (the end of October or beginning of November), St. George's Day at the end of October, the summer solstice on the 23rd of July, and the funeral of Yarila at the beginning of June, this will constitute quite a few annual festivals associated with the Neolithic earth god.

Let us set aside some dates not quite suitable as borderlines between three annual phases in the life of the earth god. The winter and summer solstices are moments important in their own right, since they mark outstanding astronomical phenomena. St. George's Days, both in spring and in autumn, are boundaries between two halves of the year, cold and hot. Remembrance or All Saints Day follows several days after St. George's and, like the latter, was considered suitable for concluding and ending treaties and deals. Most probably, the Jewish Day of Atonement corresponds to this festivity (on this day and ten days before it, on the first day of the New Year, the ancient Jews brought peace offerings, whence the current customs of sacrificing a rooster and emptying one's pockets into water). The festivals of Quirinus and Elias/Perun, held in

²⁰ See chapter "The White God."



Fig. 311. Disk with three appendages: 1 — North Ossetia, Middle Ages [359, p. 40]; 2 — Russia, 19th c. [870, fig. 268]; 3 — Ingushetia, Middle Ages [244, p. 158].



Fig. 312. *Triquetrum*: 1, 2 — Koban culture of North Ossetia [537, pls. 40, 108]; 3 — Ireland, Middle Ages; 4 — medieval Russia, 12th c. [471, p. 428]; 5—8 — North America, Scandinavia, Lycia, and Japan [756, pp. 149, 153].

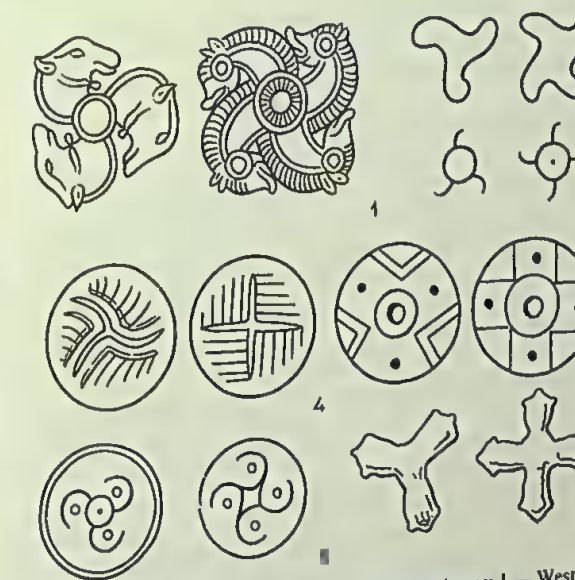


Fig. 313. Similar three-pointed and four-pointed shapes: 1 — Western Europe, Bronze Age [830, pl. 47]; 2 — elements of patterns on Daghestan rugs of 18th—19th c.; 3 — Troy [827, pl. 26]; 4 — Iran, ca 4000 BC [716, p. 68]; 5 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, pl. 22]; 6 — Yugoslavia, Bronze Age [393, p. 375]; 7 — shapes of ritual baking pieces, Northeastern Georgia [50, pl. 24].

July and August, could have been dedicated to the apex of the earth god's summer phase.

This is what remains: 1) Saturnalia or December Quirinalia; the Slavic Korachun also belongs here; 2) Shrove-tide/Carnival; 3) Yarila's funeral nearly coinciding with Whitsunday, Semik, rusalia, the festival of Vesta, and the funeral of the May goddess. The three annual phases of the male deity thus correspond to those of the female deity.

However, the third item on that list is rather doubtful. It is possible that the summer boundary of the three phases of the earth god's annual cycle fell in July or August. As a matter of fact, the months up to that moment may be looked upon as an upsurge in the god's life, followed by a decline.

Let us return to graphic symbolism.

The sign known as *triqueter* (from the Latin *triquetrus*) is apparently associated with the notion of the deity's trinity. K. Steinen endeavored to interpret the triqueter as a schematic bird representation [839, p. 280], but admitted some uncertainty. B. Rybakov declared without offering any proof that the triqueter (which he spells "triquester") is a sign of fire [475, p. 44].

Ancient Northern Caucasian and Eastern European monuments carry a sign in the form of a ring with three adjacent spiral scrolls, rather like the triqueter (Fig. 311). In terms of composition, this resembles some other symbols that express the relations between the goddess and the triple earth god (Figs. 304: 4; 361: 2). These symbols may have semantic features in common. The three spiral scrolls abutting upon the ring are signs of plants, and the latter refers to symbolism associated with the earth deity.

If this is so, the triqueter (Fig. 312) is one in the series of tripartite symbols of the earth god. The combination of three feet (Fig. 312: 7) is not the result of idle artistic doodling, but is semantically based: feet, footwear, and footprints are symbolic attributes of the earth god.

Many examples among ancient graphemes point to compositional and probably semantic similarities between the swastika and the triqueter, the cross and the three-pointed sign (Fig. 313). All these symbols are considered identical to the cross in Christian symbolism [536, p. 81]. It was called *džvar* ("cross") in Georgia [50, p. 175].

The concept of the divine trinity of the Bronze, Neolithic, and older periods was adopted by the Christian religion (this was not so when Christianity first appeared — the Holy Trinity is not mentioned until in the fourth century, i.e., when Christianity was assimilating numerous elements of pagan symbolism and rituals). According to Christian dogma, God is simultaneously one and threefold; in other words, God is triune. The point is that the Christian doctrine of one God as three persons is inherited from pagan conceptions.

Judging by data discussed in this chapter, religious notions of the second and first millennia B.C. implied that the sun god appeared over the three year cycle in a different manifestation each year, while in earlier beliefs the appearance of the male and female deities personifying hidden natural forces changed three times a year.

There were also other conceptions of the divine trinity. One can observe a consistent tendency in many ancient

religions to elevate three gods from the pantheon to the supreme rank. Ahura Mazda (a personification of the world's positive principle), Mithra (an incarnation of light), and Anahit (the goddess of fertility) were supreme deities in Zoroastrianism. Mysticization of the trinity in the teachings of Zarathustra was expressed in the belief that "three saviors" must crush the evil spirit Ahriman. The Urarty triad included Chaldi, Teishebu, and Chivini. The Etruscan supreme trinity included Tin, Uni, and Menrva, influencing the Roman trinity of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (in archaic times the Romans considered Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus as the supreme gods).

In ancient Mesopotamia different deities were promoted to the rank of supreme god at various times. A certain trinity was also venerated, judging by the fact that its emblem was prominent among graphic symbols; it was worn as a pendant around the neck (Fig. 314: 5). Four out of five examples shown here involve a crescent, i.e., a symbol of the earth god; in the fifth illustration, this god is represented by a cross. All five examples include a cogged rosette, an emblem of the heaven goddess. The third sign is in all cases a disk, covered or not with ornamentation. Let us assume that this sign designated the sun (and that where ornamented, it should be attributed to unawareness of the meaning of Neolithic symbols and to confusion of the solar image with that of the rosette which had been the Great Goddess' emblem). In such a case, the triad in question represents, in terms of the early farming conceptions, the earth god, the heaven goddess, and their child, the sun.

There is an opinion in the sources that the tripartite Mesopotamian emblem represents the sun, the moon, and the planet Venus. This opinion expresses relatively recent astral-theological conceptions, of the first millennium B.C. By that time, the earth god in his lunar manifestation had already been forgotten, the moon had become associated with a special deity, and the significance of the sun deity was considerably enhanced, while that of the Great Goddess weakened.



Fig. 314. Symbols of Sun, Moon, and Venus in Mesopotamia and Iran: 1 — Mesopotamia, ca 1200 BC [118, p. 45]; 2 — Babylon, ca 1200 BC [216a, p. 282]; 3 — Elam, ca 1500 BC [215, pl. 202].

The common Mesopotamian trinity consisted of the father-god, mother-goddess, and their son; the god of vegetation was originally their son and therefore he was the third in the triad. Ultimately, a holy trinity was formed in Babylonian theology, consisting of the divine father, the creator (demiurge), and the spirit. When Neoplatonists developed their theory of the creation, they linked these

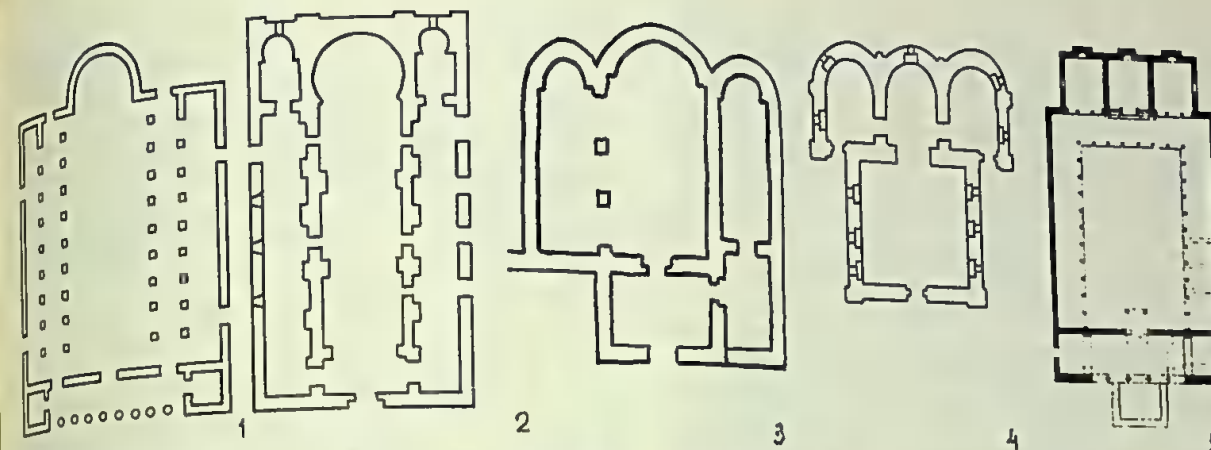


Fig. 315. Plans of early and medieval Christian churches: 1 — Jerusalem, 4th c.; 2 — Georgia, 8th c. [59, pl. 169]; 3 — Crimea, 8th c. [612, p. 66]; 4 — Russia, Middle Ages [18, p. 49]; 5 — Northern Africa, ca 300 [101b, p. 549].

three constituents of the Babylonian trinity to the oldest concept of the unity of the threefold deity. According to their teachings, one deity existed in three manifestations: the source of being, the creator, and the holy spirit. This sophisticated reasoning was assimilated by Christianity because people were used to venerating the divine Trinity.

Ancient Cretans worshiped a trinity, if one recalls that they had tripartite sanctuaries [833]. Etruscan and Assyrian temples featured three chambers dedicated to their three major deities. This custom was assimilated by the Romans, and was then adopted by the Christians. The first Christian churches, like synagogues in Classical Antiquity, had one apsis (prayer niche) (Fig. 315: 1). Later, the concept of the three gods or of the deity's trinity, inherited from paganism, prevailed. In the medieval capital of Ethiopia, Lalibela, there are Christian temples hewn in cliffs; in one of them, called Cripa Selassie (Trinity), three niches are cut with an altar in front of each [101c, pp. 111, 112]. Three chambers were arranged in the altar section of Christian churches in Iran under the Sassanids.

As a survival of this early Christian custom, some medieval Western European churches are provided with three niches in the altar portion, although there is only one altar. A tradition in Eastern Christianity calls for three apses; the altar is placed in front of the central apse, while the lateral ones serve as the sacristy and credence chambers, sometimes as other auxiliary rooms. These are a result of adapting function to form; the architectural form itself is, however, of a different origin. Early medieval churches in the Southern Caucasus had three divisions which sometimes did not even communicate (Fig. 315: 2); in the 10th—11th centuries, when the lateral rooms were made to communicate with the central one, they preserved rudiments of the former altars — the niche for prayers containing a stone slab, apparently for candles and other offerings during prayers addressed separately to each of the three deities or saints. The Byzantines at that time also existed in Russia (Fig. 315: 4). All this is a continuation of the ancient, pre-Christian tradition (Fig. 315: 5). G. Chubinashvili, a historian of Georgian architecture, maintained that the Georgian three-altar churches of the

sixth to eighth centuries were "an exclusively Georgian phenomenon" [587, p. 141]. Notions of exclusiveness in a national culture are sometimes due to insufficient knowledge combined with excessive patriotism. Three-altar temples existed in Ancient Rome, Ethiopia, and Asia Minor; in Azerbaijan, adjacent to Georgia, mosques with three divisions and three prayer niches were built in the eighth century [217, p. 26].

M. König, author of a study on Paleolithic symbolism, cites many examples showing that the number three played a special role as far back as the Paleolithic — not only among the Cro-Magnon people (men of the contemporary physical type), but also with the older Neanderthals [733, p. 131]. There were Paleolithic images of the triple goddess and of the triple serpent. One way or another, the cult significance of the number three goes back to the Paleolithic, although it is so far not clear what its meaning was at that time.

The sacred character of the number three is expressed in the rites and beliefs of many, if not all, peoples of the world. Adherents of the view that the customs of peoples speaking Indo-European languages are exceptional, too often fail to notice that other peoples have the same customs. For example, the ritual of a newly married bride walking round the fireplace of her father's house three times before leaving for her husband's house, was observed not only by Indo-Europeans, but also by Caucasian peoples. The following customs of the Chechenes and Ingushes, for instance, are of interest: when taking an oath one was supposed to walk three times around the tomb of his forefathers; a three-day fast was observed before a festival, after which the festival lasted three days; anyone guilty of negligence in the observance of a rite had to sacrifice three rams or a three-year-old bull to the sanctuary [135, pp. 87, 90, 97, 107]. Both Ossets and Hebrews baked ritual triangular flat cakes. The Jews pour water on the hands three times for the ritual ablutions. In the Christian tradition, water was sanctified by immersing a cross in it three times while welcoming the rising sun [514, p. 432]. The number three figures in numerous fairy tales and myths. It is mysticized even now: writers write trilogies, artists paint triptychs; in the USSR dissertations customarily consist of three chapters.

Certain concepts of three principles of life existed in ancient times. They were called "rivers" issuing from the

depths of the inner nature of the world in African mythology, and "threads of life" in medieval Russian treatises. These forces were designated by colors and by other symbols, contributing to their visible incorporation in the rituals in order to get closer to these forces, to tame them. For example, Africans use white to designate positive notions, black for evil, and red for life; "rivers" of these colors flow from a single sacred source (cf. an ideograph on a medieval Daghestanian stela where three rosettes are lined to one, Fig. 302: 8). The ancient Semites had three categories of ethical evaluations, symbolized by the same colors: white for honor, black for disgrace, and red for sin. The principal elements of the universe in ancient Indian philosophy were white (water), black (earth), and red (fire). The notion of three whales holding up the world derives from this type of concept.

To conclude this chapter, let us briefly mention a theory advanced by G. Dumézil [165; 665]. He believes that Indo-European myths reflected the trichotomy of the social structure characteristic of Indo-Europeans exclusively and expressed in three functions: religious and spiritual leadership, military power, and production. Dumézil's conception has both supporters and critics. We cannot analyze it in detail here, but it is worthwhile to consider it in connection with the material discussed in this book.

The principle of the trinity is not exclusive to Indo-European culture (if such an exceptional culture indeed existed.²⁰⁹) Archeological evidence does not confirm that that type of social structure was present among Proto-Indo-Europeans (which is a platform of the "three-func-

tional" conception). There is no information on castes of priests, warriors, and laborers among them.

As for the three functions of the major deities, the trichotomy corresponding to the Roman triad of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, does not have convincing analogies in the pantheons of other ancient Indo-European peoples. Dumézil has to stretch his point to find the "universal" triad he believes they possessed. This is sufficiently clear in his interpretation of the Vedic pantheon. In line with his formula, Dumézil identifies the triad of Mitrá-Varuna, Indra, and Ashvinas [665, p. 7]. The major Vedic deity Agni allegedly played a special role of completing the ritual. No part whatever was accorded to Sūriya/Savitar in the system. At the same time the author of the theory ignores the fact that there was indeed a triad in the Rig-Veda, though it did not include the major Vedic god Mitrá-Varuna: Agni, Sūriya, and Indra are treated by the Rig-Veda as incarnations of a single deity.

G. Dumézil was a well informed mythologist; he knew facts. But scholars sometimes resort to the method of fitting facts to a preconceived scheme, which does not contribute to objective knowledge.

²⁰⁹Of course, the people who were the bearers of the primary Proto-Indo-European language did possess a certain distinctive culture. However, the period of migrations, which lasted thousands of years, and the repeated mixing with the indigenous inhabitants of various regions led to the gradual disappearance of the culture. There is almost nothing about the cultures of ancient peoples speaking Indo-European languages which cannot be regarded as inherited from early farmer cultures.

STARS

We have analyzed symbols composed of two, three, and four parts. Relics of ancient cultures of Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus also exhibit graphemes, usually star-shaped, with 5, 6, 8, and 9 identical elements. The number seven, sacred to the ancient Semites, is generally absent in this graphic symbolism.

The five-pointed star was common in ancient times; it emerged very long ago (Fig. 316). Its outline somewhat resembles the silhouette of a heraldic bird figure (Fig. 317). V. Pozhidaev [427, p. 261], referring himself to A. Bobrinskoy, remarks that the five-pointed star originated from the bird image. Although attractive, this hypothesis must be rejected, because in the sixth millennium B.C. in Asia Minor, where this symbol first appeared (Fig. 316: 1), there were no bird representations which can be considered its prototype. On the other hand, numerous five-part compositions (Fig. 319) indicate that a certain specific significance which was attached to the number five played a role in the origin of the five-pointed star. Various peoples attributed a sacred, mystical significance to the number five [730a, pp. 576-578]. For example, Celtic priests tossed up and caught five stones in fortune-telling; this custom was not exclusively Celtic, if one considers that children in Russia still play such a game. A Russian manuscript reports that a certain eleventh-century sorcerer

in Kiev predicted the end of the world in five years, having received this information from five gods [40c, p. 598]. The Pythagoreans considered the number five sacred and chose the five-pointed star as their emblem.

The oldest (Neolithic) examples of the five-pointed star are known in Asia Minor, Iran, Mesopotamia, and Crete. It is encountered relatively seldom outside the territory of the early farmer cultures, but one does occasionally come across it. It was a venerated emblem in Japan and in pre-Columbian America. The sign spread with Greek colonization from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Crimea, where it is found on monuments of the Tauric Chersonese [408a, p. 19]. It is rare in Daghestan (Fig. 307: 1), but encountered in North Ossetia on artifacts of the second and beginning of the first millennia B.C. (Fig. 318: 4-6).

On one North Ossetian artifact the five-pointed star is combined with a cross, symbol of the sun or the earth; on another object it is provided with cogs symbolizing sun rays or rain clouds; a third shows spiral appendages, accessories of solar symbols during the Bronze Age while designating vegetation in Neolithic symbolism.

The five-pointed grapheme emerged in early farmers' cultures and was used in subsequent epochs, with, probably, a changed meaning. Two nearly identical solar emblems (Fig. 318: 1, 2), one with a five-pointed sign in the middle



Fig. 317. Heraldic eagle: 1 — Central Europe, Neolithic [259, p. 108]; 2 — Troy, ca 2000 BC [824, p. 562]; 3 — pre-Columbian America [642a, pl. 5]; 4 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [716, pl. 6]; 5 — emblem on a contemporary monument, Erevan (Armenia).

Fig. 316. Five-pointed star: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 395]; 2 — Sumer, ca 4000 BC [576, pl. 11]; 3 — Crete, ca 2000 BC [696, p. 85]; 4 — Troy, ca 2000 BC [824, pl. 42]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 399]; 6 — Egypt, ca 4000 BC [794, pl. 11]; 7 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 3000 BC [701, pl. 35]; 8 — Iran, Neolithic [716, p. 30]; 9 — Egypt, Neolithic [795, p. 62].

and the other with a swastika, may signify that these are identical symbols. Of course, one cannot too much rely on the symbolism of Buryat ornamentation, since the emblems used in it were borrowings and, besides, it is unlikely that the meaning of ancient symbols was known to shamans at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Yet, similar comparisons can be made in primary materials of cultures which used solar symbolism (cf. Figs. 318: 3 and 17: 5).

The Bronze Age and later periods have left different variants of five-element symbols (Fig. 319: 3, 8, 9). These can be analyzed in terms of the solar cult, but they are an obvious Neolithic heritage. Five-element arrangements on Neolithic artifacts consist of five signs, respectively, for heaven (Fig. 319: 1), earth (Fig. 319: 2), rain (Fig. 319: 4, 5, cf. Fig. 5: 2), crops (Fig. 319: 11), and vegetation (Fig. 319: 6, 10). In one Neolithic design (Fig. 319: 7), five signs of the snake (an incarnation of the earth god) surround a butterfly sign (an emblem of the heaven goddess).

As was shown above, other multiple-element symbols (double, triple, quadruple) also consist of signs of the heaven goddess, or the earth god, or the vegetation deity. However, the character of these designs and certain features of ancient myths and rites generally make it possible to relate the relevant symbols to particular deities. For example, quadruplicity is mainly associated with the earth god, whereas five-element symbols usually relate to the heaven goddess. The five-pointed star could have come into being

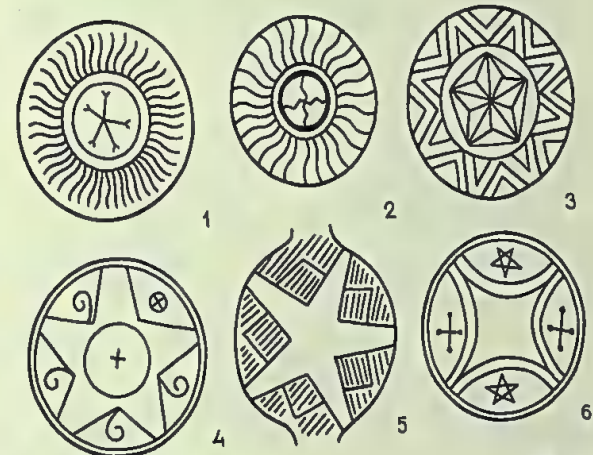


Fig. 318. Five-pointed solar symbols: 1, 2 — elements of Buryat ornament [419, pp. 230, 231]; 3 — highland Georgia [305, p. 103]; 4-6 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 54; 646b, pl. 36; 367, pl. 11].

as a diagram of five triangles — cloud signs. In some Neolithic diagrams, five cloud signs are coupled with earth signs (Fig. 316: 5, 6), from which it may be concluded that such ideographs symbolize the effect of the five states of heaven on the state of earth. Of interest in this connection is Figure 319: 6, where five signs of terrestrial vegetation alternate with five dissimilar signs which may express the idea of the five states of the goddess.

Figure 316: 8 is a five-fold image of the goddess. In Figure 316: 7 we can see five representations of the scorpion (the creature personifying the heaven goddess²¹⁰) and five wavy signs in which a conventional representation of the goddess' hair can be recognized.

In Ancient Egypt, the five-pointed star was a sign used for expressing the notion 'deity' [639, p. 137]. Egyptian cults bear a perceptible imprint of Neolithic traditions, and whenever a certain sign designated the notion 'deity' there, that deity must have been a major one in the Neolithic religion. In an Egyptian design a five-pointed star appears

²¹⁰See chapter "The Great Goddess."

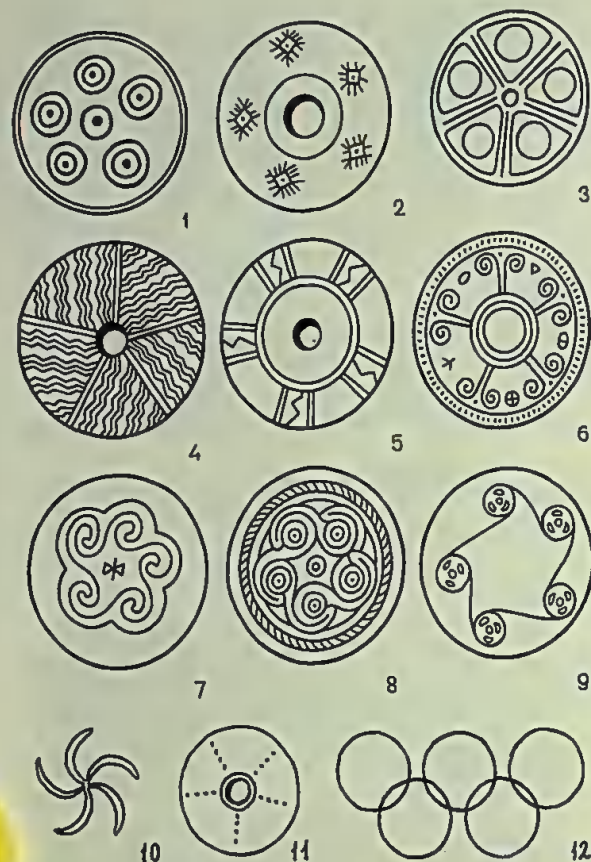


Fig. 319. Five-fold symbols: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 385]; 2, 4, 5 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [827, pls. 22, 36]; 3 — Georgia, ca 700 CE [588, pl. 86]; 6 — Spain, ca 1500 BC [788, p. 161]; 7 — Czechoslovakia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 187]; 8 — Hungary, ca 2000 BC [694, p. 63]; 9 — Hungary, ca 800 BC [719, p. 23]; 10 — Iran, ca 3000 BC [716, p. 54]; 11 — Troy [629, p. 50]; 12 — Olympic emblem.

above the head of a bull (Fig. 73: 10), where symbols of the Neolithic Great Goddess were often placed; it follows that this was a symbol of the goddess. An ancient stela can be seen on the site where the Greek Olympic games once took place; there are five rings carved on it (Fig. 319: 12), the ring being a symbol of the Great Goddess (this ancient emblem has been reinterpreted today to symbolize friendship between sportsmen of the five continents). In Ancient Egypt five circles symbolized daylight [730a, p. 577]; many mythologies, including the Egyptian, considered heaven the source of daylight. It was customary among the Abkhazians to go hunting in groups of five [10, p. 35], probably because the number five was associated with the patroness of hunting, i.e., the Great Goddess. The word for 'five' in some languages (for example, the Greek *pente*) may be regarded as a feminine form of the name Pan (*pan+ti*).²¹¹

The number five is now and then associated with female deities whose prototype was the Neolithic goddess. A festival dedicated to Hera (Here) took place once every five years. The Egyptian heaven goddess Nut had, according to myth, five children [639, p. 150]. Five priests participated in cult rites in honor of the Ossetian goddess Alardā, and the

²¹¹ The same root is found in the Avestan word *spenta* ('sacred, holy').

offerings had to include five flat cakes [12, p. 381]. Friday, the fifth day of the week in certain traditions, was dedicated to Venus/Ishtar in Mesopotamia; Slavic beliefs associated Friday with an awesome female deity. The five-pointed star was a "witch sign" in medieval Europe.

In some cases the number five had a calendar significance.

In Ancient Egypt, the year consisted of twelve thirty-day months plus five additional days dedicated to the god Ra [484, p. 45]; other evidence indicates that the five days were dedicated to five gods [438, p. 207].

In ancient times there was an eight-year calendar cycle in which lunar and solar periods were better coordinated than in the three-year cycle. The Babylonian and ancient Greek calendars adopted the cycle of eight years, of which three were leap years and five regular ones. The Greeks and Romans had an eight-year cycle which consisted of 99 months [291b, p. 194; 484, p. 103]; it may be assumed that this period was divided into five years, each consisting of 12 months, and three years, each of 13 months.

Yet another example exists of the number five reflected in a calendar: according to some data, the year could consist of five parts. In particular, it was divided into five periods of 72 days each plus supplementary five days [730a, p. 576]. An ancient Indian tradition says the year was divided into different numbers of parts, including five. The Ossetian folk calendar divided the year into three or five seasons [582, pp. 40, 41]. It was believed in Russia that the sun danced five times a year. Similar data are probably available in other ethnographies. In Figure 5: 2, five bunches of waves apparently symbolized five seasons of the year, if one takes into account that in Figure 5: 1 three bunches combined with three variously designed heaven signs designate three "states" of heaven.

We are used to four seasons and therefore do not imagine that the year could be constructed differently. In southern countries, however, the year obviously does not consist of four seasons. Winter, spring and fall are short there and encompass hardly more than half a year altogether. The remaining five or six months are dissimilar from the point of view of weather and agricultural-economic activity. They fall into two parts: "rise" and "decline." The festival dedicated to the Great God (St. Elias' Day, the day of Quirinus) at the end of July or beginning of August may be regarded as a boundary between the two parts of the warm season. Yet another date probably corresponded to this hypothetical time in the early farmers' calendar. The Christian Feast of the Assumption (14th to 23rd of August), preceded by a two-week fast, apparently derived from the Neolithic rite terminating a particular annual phase of the goddess. It must have meant that the goddess fell asleep rather than died. Hence the Russian name of the feast *Uspeenie* which means 'dormition.'

The number five played a special role in the development of man's counting skills: it is the number of fingers on the hand.²¹² Some cultures had a five-day week, probably in accordance with the number of fingers [484, pp. 12, 103]. In Ancient India, the week was associated with the

²¹² In a series of languages, words for the number 5 and for the hand are etymologically related. For example, the Old Russian *pyat* ('metacarpus') and Russian *pyat* ('five'). The Roman V for 'five' originated from a representation of the metacarpus.



Fig. 320. Six-pointed star: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 394]; 2 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 5000 BC [763, p. 65]; 3 — Southern Caucasus, ca 2000 BC [278, p. 96]; 4 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 339]; 5 — Troy [827, pl. 39]; 6 — Daghestan, wood carving [562, p. 107]; 7 — Daghestan, sign on a carved stone in Khotoda, ca 1700 [141, p. 107]; 8 — Pyrenees, Middle Ages [642b, p. 591]; 9 — Georgia, 10th c. [602, p. 37]; 10 — Russia, 15th c. [461, p. 350]; 11 — Italy, 20th c. [228a, p. 24].

five fingers of the god's hand which rotated the vault of the heavens [717, pp. 47, 103].

The sacral meaning of the number five could not have been due wholly to the fact that it was somehow connected with the calendar or that our distant forefathers resorted to their fingers for counting. We have repeatedly seen that a rationalistic interpretation of ancient cult symbols is usually unjustified. Mythological thinking follows its own specific line of reasoning. As will be shown in the next chapter, the hand image was a symbol of the Great Goddess. It is in this that the initial cult meaning of the number five should be sought.

The six-pointed star is considered a specifically Jewish symbol. But it became so relatively recently. Indications that the grapheme was used in Ancient Israel are scarce; it was more common in artifacts of other ancient cultures. There are consequently no grounds for assuming that the six-pointed star was a Hebrew national or religious emblem or that it had any symbolic significance at all in Ancient Israel. Gershom Scholem suggests the following process [828, pp. 257-276]. During the Middle Ages, the Jews, like other peoples among whom they lived, used various talismans and amulets. These objects, to which magic properties were attributed, bore certain signs known from time immemorial, but whose meaning was by then forgotten. These signs included the six-pointed star, which was no more specifically popular among Jews than among Christians or Muslims. Stylistically, the sign matched Gothic architecture. It was used to decorate Gothic churches, whence it migrated to synagogue buildings. The sign was used by the Jews as their own from the 12th—14th centuries; at about the same time its name, Magen David (Shield of David), was invented. In the 15th century it began to appear on

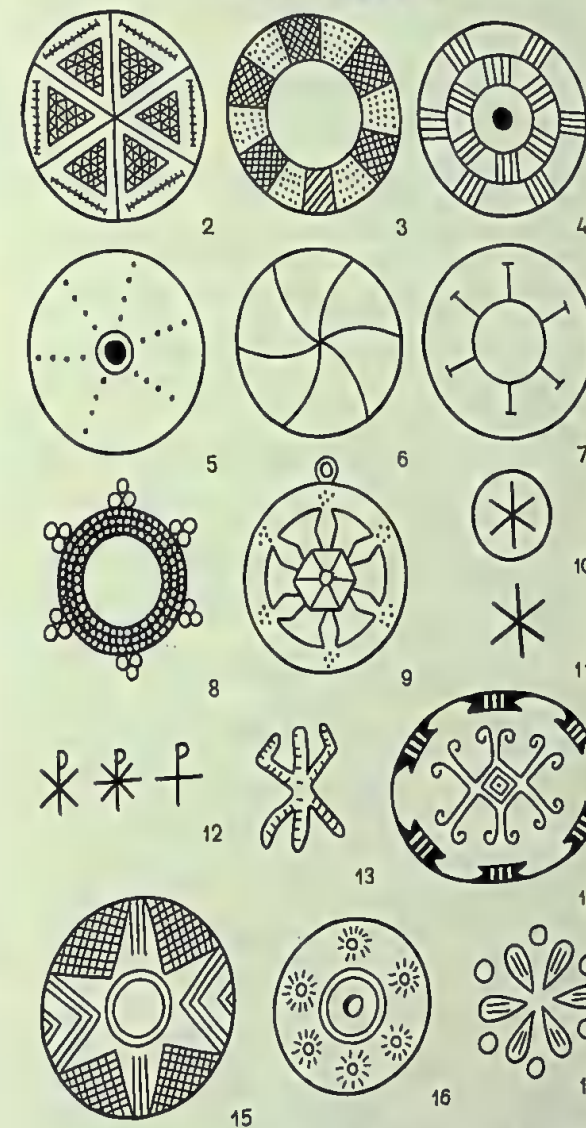


Fig. 321. Six-fold symbols: 1 — sign on clay coating of a mosque wall, Daghestan, Vikri, ca 1900; 2 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [701, fig. 31]; 3 — Italy, ca 4000 BC [381a, p. 299]; 4 — Troy, ca 3000 BC [629, p. 72]; 5 — Northwestern Caucasus, ca 3000 BC [547, p. 120]; 6 — Russia, ca 1700 [60, p. 133]; 7 — Russia, ca 1000 [578, p. 168]; 8 — Siberia, ca 1000 [578, p. 168]; 9 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [121, p. 58]; 10 — sign on a tombstone, ca 1000 BC [121, p. 58]; 11 — Hittite symbolic sign [717, p. 683]; 12 — early Christian emblem; 13 — Czechoslovakia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 184]; 14 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 399]; 15 — Egypt, Neolithic [794, pl. 13]; 16 — Troy, Neolithic [719, p. 353]; 17 — Crete, Neolithic [867, p. 231].

the covers of Jewish books. In the 14th—16th centuries, the Jewish community of Prague used it as its emblem. In the 17th—18th centuries it spread among the Jews of Austro-Hungary, and then to other places in Europe. At the end of the 19th century, the six-pointed star acquired the significance of a Jewish religious symbol and Zionists adopted it as a Jewish national emblem. It was not until then that Christians and Muslims, perceiving it as a Jewish sign, rejected it. Nevertheless, it is still encountered on churches and mosques of the early 20th century. The sign is frequently present on Islamic monuments in Daghestan; see, for example, Figure 320: 6, 7 (these designs are accompanied by inscriptions in Arabic). It figures on a Christian tombstone (Fig. 320: 8), in the ornamentation of a Christian church (Fig. 320: 9), on a cover of the Gospels (Fig. 320: 10), and as a Christmas emblem (Fig. 320: 11). The six-rayed sign was also a Christian emblem (Fig. 321: 12).

The six-pointed star came into being at the beginning of the Neolithic. The graphemes shown in Figures 320: 2 and 326: 5 can be read as six rain clouds watering the earth, or as a combination of the earth symbol with the heaven symbol consisting of a disk and six clouds. Usually, though, the oldest examples of the grapheme consist of six triangles (cloud signs) round the circumference of the disk (the heaven sign), i.e., it looks like a cogged rosette with six teeth (Fig. 320: 1, 4, 5).

There were various six-element patterns in ancient times (Fig. 321). In some of them earth signs can be identified (Fig. 321: 2, 14); in these cases the earth or vegetation is being watered by heavenly moisture represented by six signs of rain. In Figure 321: 3, signs of crops (dots) and of rain (double oblique hatching) alternate six times. Incidentally, it is interesting to compare the images in Figure 321: 14 and 1. It seems that this is the same motif handed down from generation to generation and from people to people over eight millennia.

Ancient graphemes include some which read "six corners of the world." This seems strange, for the world is generally taken to consist of four quarters: north, south, east, and west, or front, back, right, left. In Ancient India, however, the six-pointed star served as a symbolic expression of the notion "six directions of the horizon" [723, p. 39].

The horizon can be divided into any number of parts, depending on the principle of division applied. When people first started trying to determine the structure of the universe, they had to specify some reference points of the visible world. The North Star around which the

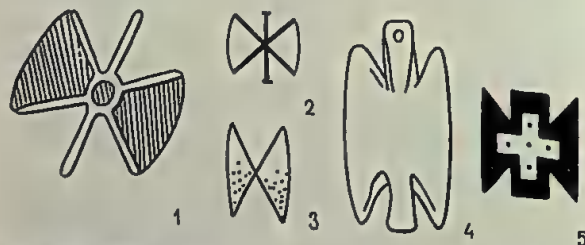


Fig. 322. Neolithic labris: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, pl. 40]; 2, 3 — Czechoslovakia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 187]; 4 — Northern Mesopotamia, ca 4000 BC [716, p. 15]; 5 — Italy, ca 3000 BC [782b, pl. 259].

starlit sky revolves is one of these. The highest point in the trajectory of the sun's movement across the sky is situated in the opposite direction. This is a natural way of designating north and south.

East and west, however, are not specified in nature. The sun does not always rise or set exactly in the east or in the west, but within certain ranges of the eastern and western horizon. If one marks the extreme points of sunrise and sunset on the horizon, more specifically sunrise and sunset at the summer and winter solstices, these directions, together with those northward and southward, will divide the circumference of the horizon into six approximately equal segments. These six directions, six radii of the world, are apparently indicated by the oldest of the known six-pointed stars or six-rayed signs (Fig. 322: 1). That this is really so is shown by two opposite shaded sectors representing the east and west as ranges within which sunrise and sunset take place. More confirmation can be found in graphemes of other periods and other cultures. In the ancient Egyptian six-pointed diagram in Figure 321: 15, opposite pairs of ends are connected by insets, which, as also in Figure 322: 1, must designate sectors of sunrise and sunset. In Ireland and Scotland there are medieval calendars arranged as follows: a circle is made on an even plot of ground with six large stones on the circumference, designating "six directions of the world," and with smaller stones between them marking specific important dates of the year [779, pp. 47, 87].

The six-pointed star is thus a sign of six directions of the horizon, associated, unlike the cross, with heaven rather than earth; consequently, the sign was an emblem of the Great Goddess. Inasmuch as this is a heaven sign, its combination with plant elements is logical (Figs. 318: 4; 320: 7; cf. Fig. 43).

The sign of six directions of heaven (Fig. 322: 1, 2) resembles a schematic representation of a butterfly. This was most probably why the butterfly was associated with the goddess (Fig. 323: 3). According to a superstition, the soul of a witch flies out of her body as a butterfly when she is asleep [40c, p. 216]. But the witch is a former

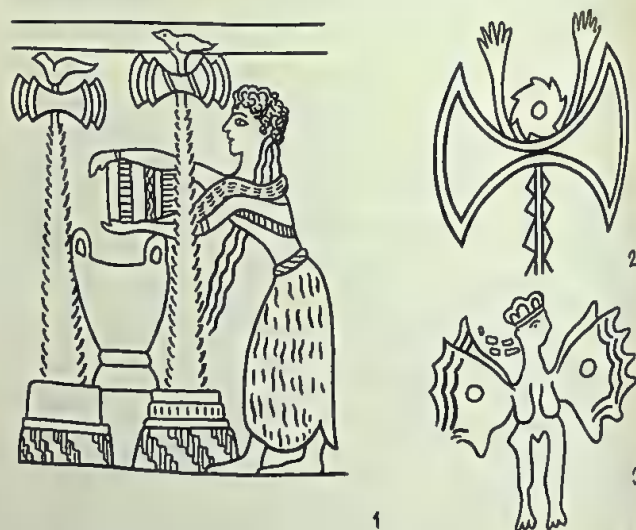


Fig. 323. Double axe cult in Crete: 1 — libation [299, p. 364]; 2, 3 — origin of the symbol [696, pp. 187, 186].

priestess of the goddess, perhaps even the goddess herself. Baba was a Slavic name for the goddess; that must be why the butterfly was called *babočka* (little baba) in Russian. Maria Gimbutas holds that the ancient Cretan sacred symbol in the form of a double axe, the labris (Fig. 323: 1), originated from the butterfly image (Fig. 323: 2, 3) and is therefore a symbol of the Great Goddess [696, p. 187]. However, ancient amulets called "labris" (Fig. 322: 4) are not even stylized representations of a butterfly. More likely, both the labris and the butterfly designs originated independently from the six-pointed star, the goddess' emblem. This sign, resembling a double axe, a symbol of the heaven goddess, could go with the cross, symbol of the earth god (Fig. 322: 5, cf. Fig. 320: 2), conveying the same message as other symbol combinations of these two deities, the most common being the cross within a circle.

Arthur Evans interpreted the Cretan double axe sign as an emblem symbolizing the union of the mutually complementing male and female principles. This is a typical example of guesswork unsupported by argumentation. M. Nilsson thought the double axe required the significance of a cult symbol because it was the shape of the axe used for beheading sacrificial animals [37, p. 195]. But that does not explain why this shape of axe was used for sacrificial offerings — a typical example of an explanation which explains nothing.

A utilitarian explanation of the origin of the labris appeared sixty years later: the double-edged axes, it went, first appeared as functional, while their religious significance was secondary [718, p. 187]. But this is at variance with the facts: functional double-edged axes did not precede cult ones, but appeared later. Why cling so tenaciously to an opinion that cult realities should be interpreted rationalistically? Probably because it seems obvious on the surface of it. How many times mankind has learned the hard way that the obvious is not always right! But such is human mentality. Had we followed the trial-and-error principle, we would have learned more by now and would have avoided errors graver than those made by scholars of mythology and symbolism.

Gimbutas is perfectly correct in pointing out that the labris could not have originally represented a double-edged axe, because at the time when the amulets presently called "labris" (Fig. 322: 4) were already long known, metal tools were not yet being manufactured, and there could be no axes of that shape. Two- (or one-) edged stone axes are inconceivable, since a stone blade would have broken off at the first blow. There are Neolithic cult objects resembling a double-edged pole-axe in shape; they are known in the Neolithic of both Europe [782c, Tables 524, 534] and America [862, pp. 448-452]. But they cannot be compared to the double axe for the simple reason that no such implement existed at the time.

During the Bronze Age, male deities (for example, the Scandinavian Thor or Slavic Perun) were provided with an axe as a characteristic attribute. Because of this, and also under the influence of Cretan symbolism, the Greeks depicted Zeus, who as a heaven god replaced the heaven goddess, with a double axe in his hand. The labris, as a symbol of the male god, was assimilated by other peoples. For example, Radegast, a god of Baltic Slavs,

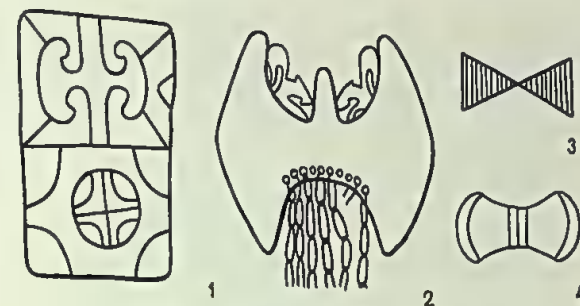


Fig. 324. Labris in Caucasus and Europe: 1 — carved stone of a mosque wall ca 1850, Daghestan, Shimikhyur; 2 — bronze object ca 800 BC, Checheno-Ingushetia [263, pl. 72]; 3 — sign on a Bronze Age vessel, Armenia [280, p. 140]; 4 — sign on a Neolithic vessel, Rumania [666, pl. 143].

was portrayed with a double axe [542, p. 45]. Having the significance of a venerated symbol, the double axe became a sign of consular rank in Ancient Rome.

Independently of the Mediterranean double axe, the Neolithic sign of the labris became widespread; it is encountered even in Siberia [476, p. 193]. The labris sign is also known in the Caucasus (Fig. 324: 1, 2), which is not surprising, since the Caucasus is adjacent to the Western Asian region of early farmer cultures.

The bow-shaped symbol (Figs. 322: 3; 324: 3) had a different origin; it is a variant of the doubled signs of the goddess (two cloud signs). The bow-shaped symbol and the labris are similar; besides, they have similar semantics (both are emblems of the goddess); they could therefore have been confused or, to use the linguistic term, have experienced contamination.

In Figure 321: 10, the six-ray star and the circle in which it is inscribed are separated. In other cases, the tips of the star's radii touch the circumference. This did not prevent those who knew the meaning of the symbol from seeing the same message in both variants; similarly, different ways of writing a letter do not prevent us from perceiving it correctly. The cross in a circle was also depicted in different ways: the tips of the cross touched the circle or didn't. That was how Neolithic graphemes resembling a wheel with six or four spokes were devised when the wheel had not yet been invented.

Two-, three-, four-, and five-element Neolithic symbols were not confined strictly to a particular deity. They could apply to the heaven goddess, the earth god, and the vegetation deity, expressing under different aspects concepts concerning natural cycles and the structure of the world. This also applies to six-element symbols, which were not associated with the heaven goddess alone. Examples have already been given and can be multiplied. According to certain data, a six-rayed figure in a circle, i.e., a sign in the form of a wheel with six spokes, was perceived as an emblem of the earth god. In pre-Aryan India it was sometimes depicted on a bull's flank [97, p. 282]. In Ancient Rome it was associated with Jupiter, who as a thundergod shared this function with the Neolithic as a thundergod. The symbol was called the god of earth and thunder. B. Rybakov, deciphering a fourth century calendar, concluded that the sign designated the 20th of July, the day dedicated to the Neolithic god of earth and thunder. Rybakov believes, however, that the

sign must be associated with Rod and not with Perun [467, pp. 79, 89]. But Rod is simply another name of the thundergod (the underworld god). The Slavic Rod is not only a common progenitor: from the heavens he hurls stones down on earth.²¹³

The above examples of various six-element symbols support the judgement, discussed in the chapter "The Sun," that the six-petal rosette (Fig. 31) emerged not as a meaningless ornamental design, but had specific meaning. It is likely that the semantics of six-element graphemes changed during the Bronze Age from their meaning in the Neolithic.

In the Tien Shan mountains, among Bronze Age petroglyphs, many of which are graphic representations of an ancient calendar, there are pictures of a sun with 28 rays and another within it with 12 rays; this was apparently meant to designate the number of months in a year and the number of days in a month.²¹⁴ If the number of rays in the symbolic representations of the sun express calendar quantities, the six rays of the rosette most probably conveyed the same information. The calendar meaning of the number six may be accounted for by the fact that the year was pictured as consisting of two halves with six months each. In another variant, the year was divided into six seasons of two months each [484, p. 133].

It was noted above that the number seven is not, generally speaking, reflected in the graphic symbolism of either early farming or ancient Indo-European religions. Occasionally, however, though very rarely, seven-element symbols are encountered. It seems that, if not fortuitous, they were borrowed from the range of notions of the cultures in which the number seven was sacred. Some authors express the opinion that special significance was attached to this number as far back as the Paleolithic, mentioning in this connection, for example, the seven stars of the Great Bear Constellation and the seven days of the week. M. König [733] thinks that in the Paleolithic the sacral number seven resulted from the combination of three and four, and that the three, denoting lunar phases, personified the concept of time, while the four, denoting the major directions, represented the structure of space. Other authors believe that the number three symbolized the structure of the world, expressing the idea of the three levels of the universe [93, p. 25; 536, p. 95]. Indeed, according to the Rig-Veda, in some rites four priests represented the four directions, while three priestesses represented the three levels of the universe [272, p. 73]. Such ancient notions, enduring for millennia, spread to different peoples;

²¹³B. Rybakov misinterprets the word *hrudy* as 'rain drops' [475, p. 448]. In Ukrainian, for example, it means 'hard pieces of earth.' The name *Rod*, corresponding to the Slavic *rod*, *roditi*, etc., is etymologically related to words in other Indo-European languages (incidentally, the latter correlates morphologically with the above-mentioned *hrudy*). The nature of Rod is suggested by such words as the Indo-European *r.d* ('red'), Sumerian *urta* ('earth'), and others (see chapter "The Black God" for details).

²¹⁴The lunar month has 29 and a half days. The ancients chose a conventional number of days in a month which would not contain fractions and could be divided into weeks with equal numbers of days. By way of example, the lunar month could consist of 27 or 28 days comprising three or four weeks, nine or seven days each; the remaining days, falling on moonless nights, were supplementary.



Fig. 325. Eight-fold symbols: 1 — grave stela, 19th c., Daghestan, Tinit; 2 — cult article, Russia, late Middle Ages [149, p. 481]; 3 — Turkmenia, ca 3000 BC [345, p. 68]; 4—6 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, pls. 38, 121]; 7, 8 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 391]; 9 — Western Siberia, Bronze Age [253, p. 28]; 10 — Northern Mesopotamia, Aeneolithic [701, fig. 45]; 11—13 — Russia, Paleolithic [46, p. 43].

for example, in Bambara (Nigeria) mythology, the sacred number seven is the sum of three and four [371b, p. 558].

In Ancient Mesopotamia a seven-day week was adopted; the days of the week were dedicated to seven heavenly bodies: the Sun, the Moon, the planets Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. The seven-day week cannot be considered a natural quarter of the lunar month, because the moon has three rather than four phases. Such a week is not convenient for measuring time, since neither the lunar month nor the solar year are divisible by it. Its origin should be sought not in particular objective preconditions, but in the sacral significance of the number seven.

On the other hand, various eight-element symbols are commonly encountered. The Sumerians used the eight-pointed star as a hieroglyph for 'god, heaven, star'; in Akkad and in Babylonia this ideograph expressed the notions 'god, sun, star, year' [748, p. 379]. These meanings of the sign are, of course, secondary. To throw light on its original semantics, one should resort to evidence from times prior to the invention of writing and analyze the characteristics of the graphemes proper.

It was already pointed out above that the eight-rayed

sign could have devolved from a combination of the upright and oblique crosses (Fig. 219). The grapheme of such an origin is represented by the diagram in Figure 325: 1. Quite ancient is another variant of the eight-rayed star, in which the radii are arranged in four pairs (Fig. 325: 4), corresponding to the notion of the four directions of the world. The latter assumption is confirmed by the sign of a cross with branching ends and of the rhombus with double appendages at the angles (Fig. 325: 5-7).²¹⁵

The cross and the rhombus are Neolithic earth symbols. The association between the number eight and the notion of earth evidently calls for explanation. Figure 325: 8 shows an eight-pointed star surrounded by five cloud signs. The graphic symbolism of this culture (the Early Neolithic of Asia Minor) and of other Neolithic cultures is characterized by designs of the earth sign with heaven signs around it. Consequently, this grapheme is a combination of the five-element heaven sign and the eight-element earth sign. The meaning of the five-fold goddess has already been discussed. But what was the meaning of the eight-sided earth? In addition to the notion of the four directions of the world, in ancient times there was also a notion of eight directions — four main and four auxiliary. These two notions are possibly expressed by the similar four-element and eight-element Paleolithic symbols (Fig. 325: 11-13).

The grapheme in Figure 325: 9 recalls the fact that ancient Indian town-building treatises contain schematic town plans not only in the form of a square with intersecting main streets, but also octagonal. Since the town plan was likened to the image of the earth, the octagonal figure may be considered as such an image. A Vedic hymn glorifying the sun says that the sun illuminates "eight regions" [514, p. 436]. An eight-pointed sign formed by eight twigs (Fig. 325: 10) may be perceived as an ideograph of the "eight regions of the earth."

In Ancient India, the eight directions of the horizon were venerated; they were associated with eight gods called "guards of the world" [97, pp. 257, 265]. According to a Scandinavian tradition, the world had eight directions [779, p. 41]. The Perun sanctuary in Kiev was surrounded by eight places for making fire arranged in the four main directions of the horizon and four intermediate ones [198, p. 27]. The notion that the world has four main sides and four intermediate ones was known in Ancient China [93, p. 26] and Ancient America (Fig. 326: 1). It was reflected in Christian emblems (Fig. 326: 2). The notion applied not only to the terrestrial sphere, but to the heavenly universe as well, judging, for example, by a Neolithic grapheme of a disk with eight triangles, directed inwards, along the circumference [794, Table 13], and by the fact that variants of the winged disk (which symbolized heaven) representation included a circle with an eight-pointed star inside it [773, p. 37].

The sacral significance of the number eight could also have had a calendar-astronomical basis [558, p. 314]. Once every eight years the full moon phase coincides with the solstice, and the time calculated by the sun and the moon

²¹⁵B. Rybakov, having encountered the sign shown in Figure 325: 6 in ancient Russian artifacts, decided it was a representation of the four-log rectangles from which Russian huts are built [471, p. 444].

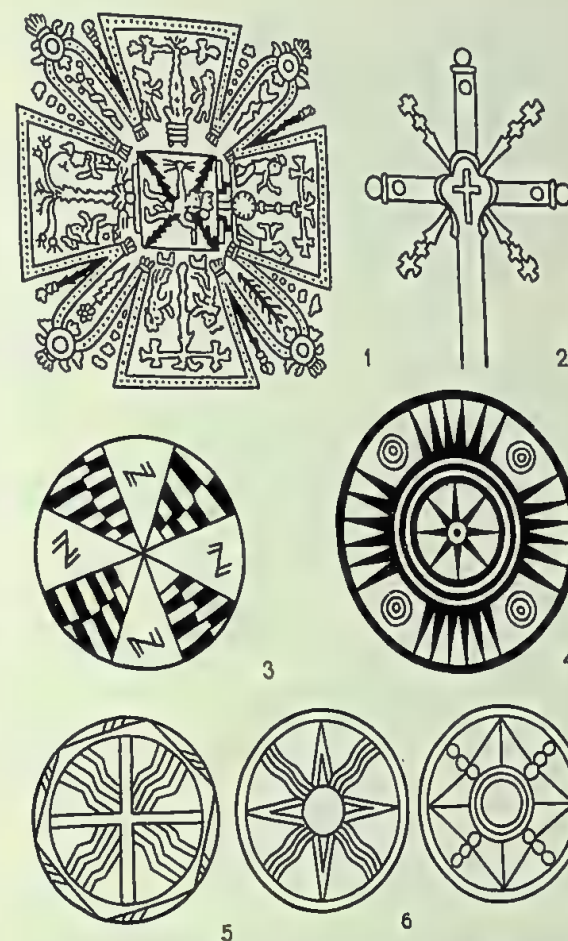


Fig. 326. Four-and-eight-fold symbols: 1 — pre-Columbian America [656, p. 44]; 2 — Lithuania, ca 1900 [693, p. 7]; 3 — Iran, Neolithic [765, p. 193]; 4 — Ancient Greece [632, pl. 7]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [764b, p. 391]; 6 — Iran, ca 1000 BC [361, p. 133]; 7 — Spain, ca 600 CE [744, pl. 170].

coincide.²¹⁶ Ancient Near Eastern countries and Ancient Greece adopted an eight-year calendar cycle supported by a cult. It was logical to figure that the great celestial luminaries — the sun and the moon — complete their cycle in eight years and then start a new cycle. In accordance with this, for instance, in Sparta the king was supposed to rule for a period of eight years. As the story goes, when the term "in office" of the legendary Cretan King Minos was coming to an end, he appealed to Zeus and was installed for another eight-year period [558, p. 315]. It is not by chance that in many Indo-European languages the numeral "nine" and the adjective "new, novel" are formed from the same root.

The eight-pointed star was perceived as a solar symbol (Fig. 327) since the Bronze Age.

Nine-element graphemes are also known. Nine-element symbolic signs appeared as early as the Paleolithic. Signs meaning "three times three" were used both in the Paleolithic and during the Bronze Age (Fig. 328: 1, 2, 6).

Nine also had a calendar significance. Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Teutons had a nine-day week; the 27-day period when the moon could be seen in the sky consisted of

²¹⁶This is not quite accurate, so 19, 28, and 84-year and other calendar cycles appeared [291c, p. 280].



Fig. 327. Eight-pointed star: 1 — Iran, ca 2000 BC [716, p. 145]; 2 — Volga region, ca 1000 BC [496, pl. 16]; 3 — Abkhazia, ca 800 CE [494, p. 169].

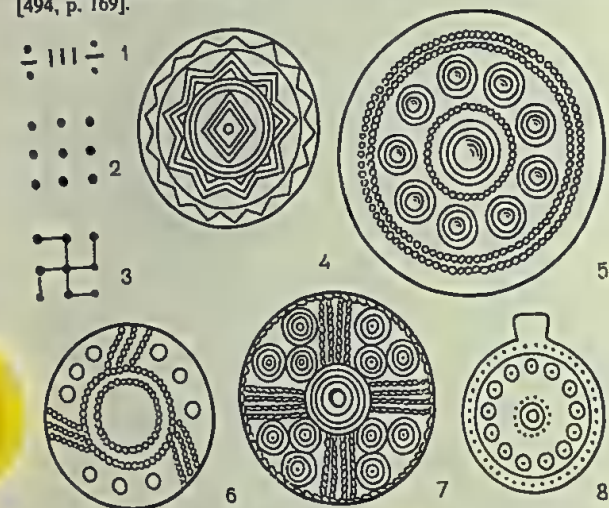


Fig. 328. 9-, 12- and 13-fold symbols: 1, 2 — Western Europe, Paleolithic [733, pp. 143, 138]; 3 — Ancient China [756, p. 86]; 4 — Asia Minor, Neolithic [764b, p. 394]; 5 — England, Bronze Age [735, p. 12]; 6 — Rumania, Bronze Age [694, p. 217]; 7 — Northern Caucasus, Bronze Age [361, p. 139]; 8 — Armenia, Bronze Age [276, p. 99].

three weeks in accordance with lunar phases, then additional moonless days followed till the beginning of a new month [831, pp. 1-9]. Caucasian mountain dwellers also knew the nine-day week. The nine-year period may also have existed. The ancient Lithuanian calendar seems to have been based on it [198, p. 30; 489a, p. 99]. The designs in Figure 328: 4, 5 appear to be ideographs with calendar semantics.

B. Rybakov links the sacral significance of the number nine to the nine months of pregnancy [474, p. 14]. There is much better reason, however, to correlate it with the Neolithic god of the underworld and thunder. The serpent in Slavic fairy tales often had nine heads, the witch had nine brothers [198, p. 127]. An old Lithuanian lyric runs: "Father Perkun had nine sons, three of them hitting, three thundering, three flashing" [829a, p. 533]. A rite for exorcising worms, identified with snakes, used the number nine [526, p. 25]. The mythological nine-headed Hydriades was known not only in Ancient Greece, but in medieval Cambodia as well [780, p. 486]. The name of an Aztec goddess, Chekomekoatl, means "nine snakes" [371a, p. 470]. According to Russian tradition, the bear emerges from its lair on the 9th of March. The Nanayans pictured the mythical lord of the woods as a bear with nine humps [371b, p. 49]. The Etruscans believed that lightning was sent by "nine gods." In Russia, the ninth week following Easter was particularly honored. It was customary in

England to light nine candles at the summer solstice. In other countries, a bonfire lit at the feast of the summer solstice had to include nine species of wood [790, pp. 236, 245]. The Ossets baked one large and nine smaller cakes for the New Year holiday [12, p. 402].

In Ancient Rome and Iran, the number nine had chthonic significance [721, p. 16]. The funeral rite in Sardinia continued nine days. The number nine is involved in funeral rituals of the American Indians [669, p. 11]. A Georgian medieval chronicle relates that the body of the deceased Queen Tamar was wrapped in nine arshins of linen [143, p. 184]; this piece of information recurs as a refrain, suggesting that it was common burial practice. Evidently the number nine had chthonic meaning because it was associated with the earth god. The association was probably due to the fact that the terrestrial world had "eight sides and a middle" (the same notion was shared in Ancient India and by the Aztecs), or else the sacral "nine" may mean "three times three."

In the period of Classical Antiquity and later, the number nine continued to be mysticized: the jury at the Olympic games included nine judges; nine archons were in power in the Greek republics; nine muses presided over song and poetry and the arts and sciences; Herodotus' *History* comprises nine books. The ancient Teutons valued the sacrifice of nine animals, and nine courses were served at ceremonial feasts. Dante's hell has nine circles; Scandinavian and pre-Columbian American myths told of nine levels of the underworld [656, p. 43]; the Christian paradise has nine spheres; tradition ascribes particularly disastrous properties to the ninth wave. The sacral number nine figures in the popular speech of various peoples; in English, "A stitch in time saves nine", and something is "a nine days' wonder."

The design of twelve suns located in four sectors (Fig. 328: 7) probably points to the twelve months and four seasons of the year. This 12-element Bronze Age symbol evidently echoes a corresponding Neolithic grapheme; this can be estimated not only from the fact that the suns in the design are represented by Neolithic cloud signs, but also because similar designs existed in the Neolithic (Fig. 202: 1). Thirteen suns (Fig. 328: 8) are apparently dedicated to the 13 month leap year.

The designs in Figure 329 resemble the conventional pattern of the heavens. The scattered little circles may be interpreted as stars in the sky. That was possibly how pictures of this type were perceived when the meaning of the Neolithic symbols was forgotten. Yet in terms of that symbolism their meaning is different. The little circles with or without dots are seed, and the semioval around the seeds is a cloud watering crops.

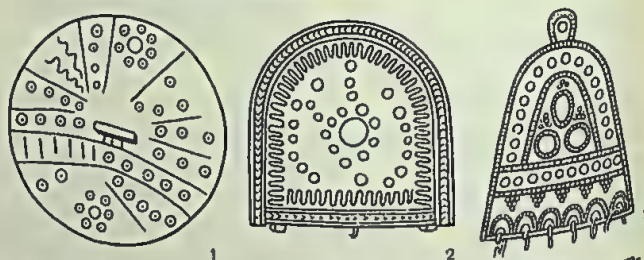


Fig. 329. Many-fold compositions: 1 — Troy [827, p. 235]; 2 — woman's chest decoration, Daghestan; 3 — pendant, Volga region [497, pl. 12].

THE HAND OF GOD

One encounters in Daghestan numerous representations of a hand carved on stone (Fig. 330: 1-8) or as palm prints on a plastered wall. In Ingushetia and North Ossetia, prints of the hand can be seen on the wall plaster of medieval tombs. In the Northern Caucasus, amulets in the form of a hand have been found in Bronze Age excavations of the Koban culture. Numerous hand images have been found in the Southern Caucasus [350] and the Pamirs [69, pp. 74, 113]. Hand images were used as amulets by many ancient peoples throughout the Mediterranean area, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, and India [628, pp. 156, 157; 858, p. 229]. Prints of the hand or hand images are known in the Americas [659a, p. 265; 702, p. 56; 784, p. 365] and Australia [192, p. 111; 566a, p. 138]. Hands occur as imprints or as negative (outlined by paint) impressions of the palm, with fingers spread wide, on cave walls in France and Spain; they were made about 20 thousand years ago (Fig. 331: 1). The hand is thus an extremely old symbol.

The art critic L. Lyubimov wrote concerning Paleolithic representations of the hand: "Was this the way primitive man wished to leave his imprint on stone, to immortalize himself visually, to record and stress his presence?" [300,

p. 22]. This opinion is shared by the archeologists A. Okladnikov, who writes that the Paleolithic hand imprints "representing the man himself, served as his double" [401, p. 38], and A. Stolar, who believes that the hand imprint served during the Paleolithic as the "phenomenal self-expression of a specific man," rather than a generalizing sign [507, p. 14]. Indeed, the hand does in a way represent a person. In Daghestan, for example, a builder "signed" his work with his palm print. In some archaic languages the word "man" designates the figure five, i.e., the hand with five fingers. Voting is done by a show of hands. *Manus* is the Latin for 'hand,' and the Sanskrit word means 'man' in Sanskrit.

In old Russian shirt embroidery, the sleeves and shoulder stripes were particularly impressive [125, p. 62]. In ancient times this was not so much out of a desire to adorn an object as to impart necessary qualities to it. The details that later became only decorative, initially had practical significance, also as charms; this was the initial purpose of embroidery on clothing. This is confirmed by the fact that there might be embroidery even under the armpits, where it is hardly seen; armpit insets of colored cloth were details of Georgian folk garments [705, Table 7]. It is quite likely that this was intended to enhance the creative capacity of human hands.

Mountain-dwelling Georgians — Khevsurs, Tushins — and their Daghestanian neighbors the Avars, severed the right hand of a slain enemy and fixed it on the door of their house [51, p. 52; 185b, p. 32; 224, p. 455], clearly symbolizing appropriation of the enemy's power or disabling him. This is an ancient custom: in the Northern Caucasus, excavations sometimes reveal hand bones on stone slabs covering graves, which may be the trace of a sacrificial offering [230, p. 39].

Stelas with hand images were placed at the boundaries between estates in medieval Georgia; in this case the hand symbolized power, ownership [350, p. 109]. The Latin *manus* ('hand') also means 'power, strength.' In Old Russian, the word for 'hand' was *mysca* ('muscle'), which is related to *mošč*, 'power.'



Fig. 330. Representations of hand with sacred symbol, on carved stones: 1-8 — Daghestan [37 a.o.]; 9, 10 — Chechenia [797, p. 57]; 11 — Abkhazia [494, p. 169].



Fig. 331. Cult portrayals of hand: 1 — Paleolithic [599, pl. 252]; 2 — Middle Ages [617, p. 33].

Mythological thinking did not differentiate between natural and supernatural. Therefore, if a hand possesses physical strength, it must also possess magic powers. Belief in the magic properties of the hand was until recently preserved in superstitious notions that certain combinations of finger positions may counteract hostile powers and neutralize witchcraft, the "evil eye," etc.,²¹⁷ whereas an open palm meant protection, warding off ill fortune. Belief in the magic power of hand images has been expressed in local comment on wall handprints in Daghestan: "He who doesn't make them endangers his life" [20, p. 83].

Yet the hand image symbolized not only man, human strength, and human power, and it was not for the sake of self-assertion that primitive people left their hand impressions on walls. A. Stolar writes about Paleolithic hand impressions that their very multiplicity "points to the absence of a common symbol" [507, p. 15]. In Early Neolithic sanctuaries of Asia Minor (Çatal-Hüyük), however, in addition to natural hand impressions, there are numerous painted hand images devoid of individuality [762, p. 83, Tables 41-44], suggesting that they could have had a symbolic meaning.

Paleolithic hand imprints occur in the depths of caves, in hidden places often difficult of access, which obviously served as sanctuaries. Why should anyone go there to assert his ego?

Paleolithic "hands" are rather small in size. This leads to two different inferences. Some scholars believe that these hand imprints are of adolescents and were made during the rites of initiation. But why do left hands prevail? This could not be due to the technique of making the impression, since it was generally done by blowing paint from the mouth, and it made no difference technically which hand was placed against the wall — left or right. As we know, the left-right opposition has been related to the notion of "female-male" since ancient times. It is likely that the authors who believe the Paleolithic hand imprints belong to women are correct. But what was their purpose?

These imprints not infrequently occur in combination with animal representations. The following conclusion has sometimes been drawn from this: "It cannot be ruled out that the ancient hunter, by placing his hand, leaving his trace on an animal representation, sought by magic to bend it to his will, to make it his game" [401, p. 64]. But since this operation was performed not by the hunter himself but by a woman, this means that the woman was attributed the ability to affect the outcome of the hunt (if that was the purpose of the imprints).

In Islamic tradition, the hand image appears on grave-stones where women are buried. The hand-shaped amulet was referred to by Christians as "Mary's hand," by Muslims as "Fatima's hand," by Babylonians as the "hand of Ishtar," and by Egyptians as the "hand of Isis" [741, p. 2]. These personages were echoes of the Neolithic Great Goddess, so that the hand was apparently a symbol of that goddess. And since there is reason to believe that the image of the Neolithic goddess descended from the Paleolithic, the

conclusion may be drawn that the Paleolithic hand imprints were made as a symbolic expression of the goddess' will, power, and action. It is apparently because the hand symbolized divinity that the ritual developed of kissing priestly hands, and the habit of kissing ladies' hands is evidence that the deity was female.

The ritual of ablution is observed in various religions. The hands are not really washed, water is just poured over them. In this ritual one can see a survival of the act which expressed the idea of the union of the male principle in nature (here symbolized by water) and the female (the hand).

Religious consciousness perceives all phenomena as a manifestation of supernatural forces. The effect of these forces on reality is by no means understood as resulting from the application of hands. In our days religious people do not think God uses His hands as humans do. Nor did the ancients think so, as far as is known, and primitive man could hardly have maintained a different opinion as to the mechanics of the action of divine forces. The religious notion of the action of divine forces. The religious notion of the Hand of God is allegorical. Consequently, if one proceeds from the assumption that the notion of direct physical action by the deity never existed, it will suggest that the symbol of the hand related to a deity was not an expression of such a notion. What then was its origin? It is possible that the hand became a symbol of the goddess because the hand with the fingers spread wide resembles a tree, and the latter was considered an incarnation of the goddess. If this is so, we have here yet another case of an object acquiring symbolic significance if its appearance resembles that of a graphic symbol or of another object to

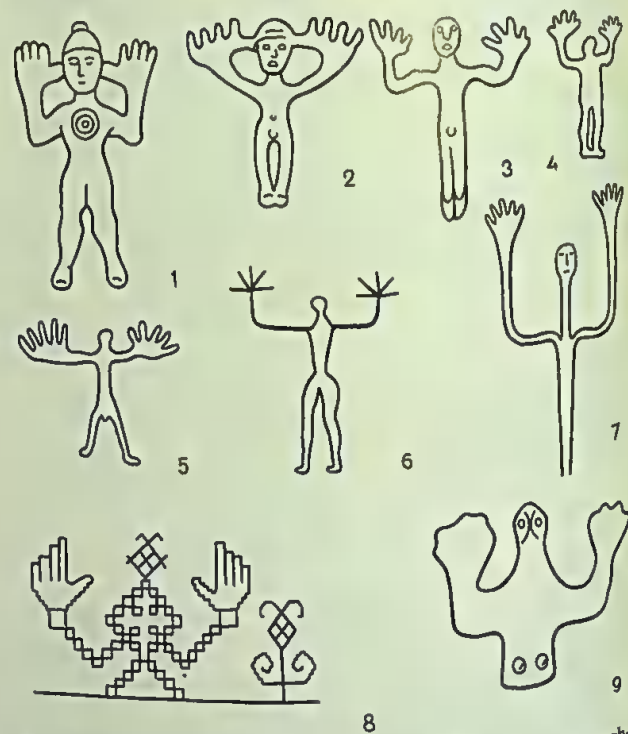


Fig. 332. Human figure with raised hands: 1 — bronze figurine, Daghestan [585, p. 81]; 2, 3 — bronze figurines ca 1000 BC, Chechenia and Ossetia [719, p. 53]; 4—6 — rock wall pictures in Sweden, Armenia, and Kirghizia [719, p. 53; 340, p. 62; 33b, p. 451]; 7 — figurine of "water spirit", Mali [275, p. 12]; 8 — Russian embroidery [125, p. 79]; 9 — Czechoslovakia, ca 3000 BC [74, p. 171].



Fig. 333. Sign of three-fingered hand: 1, 2 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, pp. 321, 350]; 3 — Iran, Neolithic [716, pp. 21, 26]; 4 — Chechenia, Middle Ages [321, p. 116]; 5 — Ingushetia, ca 1900 [79, p. 11]; 6 — from a medieval Scandinavian manuscript; also in Lithuania [683, p. 103]; 7 — Sweden, Bronze Age [628, p. 175].

which sacral meaning was attributed.

There are ancient representations of the human figure with raised hands; the palms are abnormally large, with the fingers spread wide (Fig. 332). It is generally believed that these portrayals of people in prayer. The raised hands are, indeed, a gesture of praying common to all mankind; it was assimilated by Christianity and Islam. That the praying gesture is directed upwards is understandable: God dwells in heaven. The exaggerated palms may have expressed the idea that since the hand possesses magic power, a larger hand is particularly effective in influencing the deity.

A different course of reasoning is also possible. The hand with fingers spread wide might initially have designated the sacred tree, a symbol of the goddess. In praying to the goddess, people raised their hands to form her symbol. Thus, the abnormally large hands are an emphasized symbol. Deities have often been portrayed with their symbols, so figures with uplifted hands may represent not a praying individual, but rather a deity. Originally this was the Great Goddess, but later, when the posture became traditional and its initial meaning was forgotten, a male

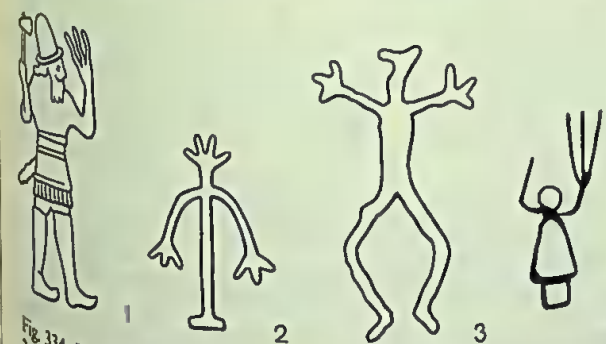


Fig. 334. Portrayals of three-fingered deity: 1 — Hittite [628, p. 156]; 2 — embroidery figure, Daghestan; 3 — rock wall picture, Karelia [443, p. 10]; 4 — rock wall picture, Urals [577, p. 67].

deity was occasionally depicted in the same posture. In the course of time the posture could be interpreted in a variety of ways: as an expression of the deity's power, as a gesture of blessing, as an appeal by the earth goddess to the heaven god, etc.

The hand sign could symbolize the action of a male as well as of a female deity. It is a custom in India to place red hand imprints on the walls of a house where a wedding is performed, as a way of wishing the new family happiness. Red was usually associated with the underworld god, although in some cases it was applied to his spouse as well.

In Daghestan, hands carved on stones are usually accompanied by solar signs (Fig. 330: 1-8). This type of image is also evident in Chechenia and Georgia [51, p. 52; 350, Figs. 8, 23] (Fig. 330: 10, 11), as well as in the Baltic area [192, p. 111]. The hand with a solar sign is the "hand of God,"²¹⁸ in this case a symbol of action, strength, power, and the presence of a solar deity. This is also evidenced by Christian representations of the hand of God in combination with a solar symbol (Fig. 331: 2). That the hand image related to a deity and not a human being is confirmed by a drawing representing it as a certain being, apparently an incarnation of divinity's power (Fig. 330: 9). This drawing may also be a relic of an ancient, if not primeval, notion: the goddess depicted by her symbol — a hand.

Some publications express the opinion that the hand was a symbol of the deity of dawn, and the spread fingers symbolized the rays of the rising sun [628, pp. 156, 158; 760, p. 171; 797, pp. 60, 61; 856, p. 144]. Homer describes Eos, the goddess of dawn, as "rosy-fingered." The Vedic god of daylight raises his golden hands above the world in the morning [40a, p. 199]. Ancient Greeks and Hebrews kissed their own hands as an act of worship of the rising sun [514, p. 438; 829b, p. 100; 411, p. 206]. Why was the hand associated with the rising sun? The likening of the fingers to sun rays is a later interpretation. The hand is a symbol of the Great Goddess, and the sun is her daughter, hence the ritual of hand-kissing at sunrise.

In Ancient Egypt, the disk with rays ending in hands was among symbols of the divine sun (Fig. 26: 9). Symbolic representations of the sun with such detail are also known in Northern Europe (Fig. 333: 6). It seems, however, that pictures of this type originally referred to beliefs preceding the solar cult, since the disk was a symbol of the heaven goddess in the Neolithic religion, and the hand sign was associated with her image.

Elements in the form of a tridactylous hand (Fig. 333: 1-5) are frequently encountered in the decorative art of Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus. This is a divine hand; judging by some ancient representations of the deity, the latter was imagined as tridactylous (Fig. 334).

The tridactylous hand is that of a bird. The association of the deity with the bird may be accounted for in different ways. 1) In terms of the solar cult: the sun was pictured as a bird or as related to waterfowl which depart in autumn when the sun retires and return with the sun in

²¹⁸In Ancient Egypt, the ideograph of the hand was used to designate the notion "divine power" [192, p. 129].

²¹⁷The clenched fist with the thumb between the index and middle fingers was believed to avert evil spirits and diseases among both Slavs and African Blacks" [593, p. 8].

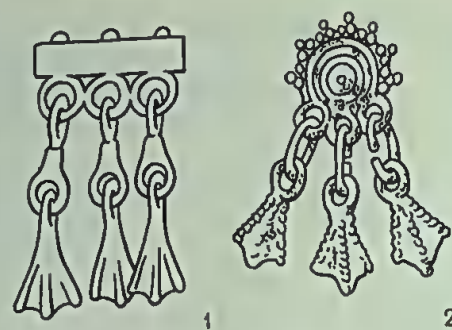


Fig. 335. Pendant amulets in the shape of waterfowl's feet: 1 — North Ossetia [537, p. 315]; 2 — Volga region [497, pl. 17].

spring. In the Northern Caucasus and in Eastern Europe, pendant amulets in the form of waterfowl claws are known, sometimes in combination with a disk (Fig. 335). 2) The disk is a sign of heaven, and the tridactylous hands attached to it relate to the Great Goddess. In the early farmers' cult, the goddess residing in heaven was pictured as a bird; in particular, waterfowl were associated with the goddess, because she was mistress of the waters.

The tetradactylous hand (Fig. 336: 1, 2) was also a symbol of the goddess, since together with the spur the bird's foot has four, rather than three, "fingers" (Fig. 336: 4). Sometimes the goddess had four-fingered hands even in her anthropomorphic representation (Fig. 336: 3).

A grapheme of a disk with appendages resembling hands with fingers (Fig. 333: 7) is occasionally encountered in rock wall paintings of Scandinavia and in the folk art of



Fig. 336. Four-fingered hand in Neolithic: 1 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 343]; 2 — Bulgaria, ca 4000 BC [696, p. 165]; 3 — Yugoslavia, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 194]; 4 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764b, p. 341].

Daghestan; these details also resemble schematic representations of plants. If such designs stem from the Neolithic, which is quite plausible, they must be understood as a sign of heaven with adjacent plants or hands. The combination of heaven and plants is understandable; examples of such combinations have already been analyzed. But if the elements alongside the disk represent hands, the grapheme should be interpreted as a symbol of the goddess and of her power; in most cases these hands have three fingers.

Consequently, hand images initially symbolized the Great Goddess, then generally represented the hand of God, and more recently they may have represented man.

THE TREE OF LIFE

Plant motifs are not typical of Daghestanian architectural ornamentation. However, they are quite common on local fireplaces (Fig. 337: 1-4). Fireplaces in Daghestan are found mostly in the foothill areas, whose culture, unlike that of the highland regions, is closer to Mid-Eastern traditions. At the same time, the geometrical ornamentation associated with ancient cult symbolism is mainly characteristic of the highland zone. It should be noted, though, that both the plant and the non-representational geometrical ornamental motifs are related in origin to the same primeval cult tradition that stems from the Paleolithic; branches and offshoots of this tradition affected later cultures in one way or another.

Plant ornaments first appeared on Paleolithic amulets (Fig. 337: 7). It seems appropriate to point out in this connection that there was no agriculture in those times, so plants could not have been an object of veneration on the agrarian basis.

One Paleolithic amulet bears an image of a tree with roots (Fig. 337: 8). This was obviously not a record of a visually perceived phenomenon, since a plant's roots are hidden in the ground. The image is not of a plant as such, but of a sacred object whose essential constituent features are crown and roots. This image of the sacred

tree, which is assumed to have emerged in Europe in most ancient times, reached China, where a sign resembling the Russian letter Ж was a hieroglyph for "tree"; the upper and lower parts of the sign are schematic representations of the crown and roots.

Images of the sacred tree are also encountered in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 338: 3). The illustration shows a person climbing an unusual tree. In a Russian fairy tale, the hero climbs a tree which reaches up to the sky [85, p. 39]. Siberian shamans believed they could get to the sky by climbing a tree. The Russians baked pastry shaped like little ladders on the holiday of Christ's Ascension. The notion that one could get to the heavens by climbing a tree or a ladder existed among the Hittites, and most likely before them. The story of ascending to heaven by climbing a tree or in some other way may well have been told in ancient myths now forgotten.

There was a Mesopotamian myth about a sacred tree in paradise; the Bible refers to it as the Tree of Life. It is also mentioned that it grows "in the middle of the garden"; this is apparently an interpretation of an older notion of a magic tree standing in the center of the world. Legends and rites associated with the veneration of the mythical tree were common till the 19th century [288].

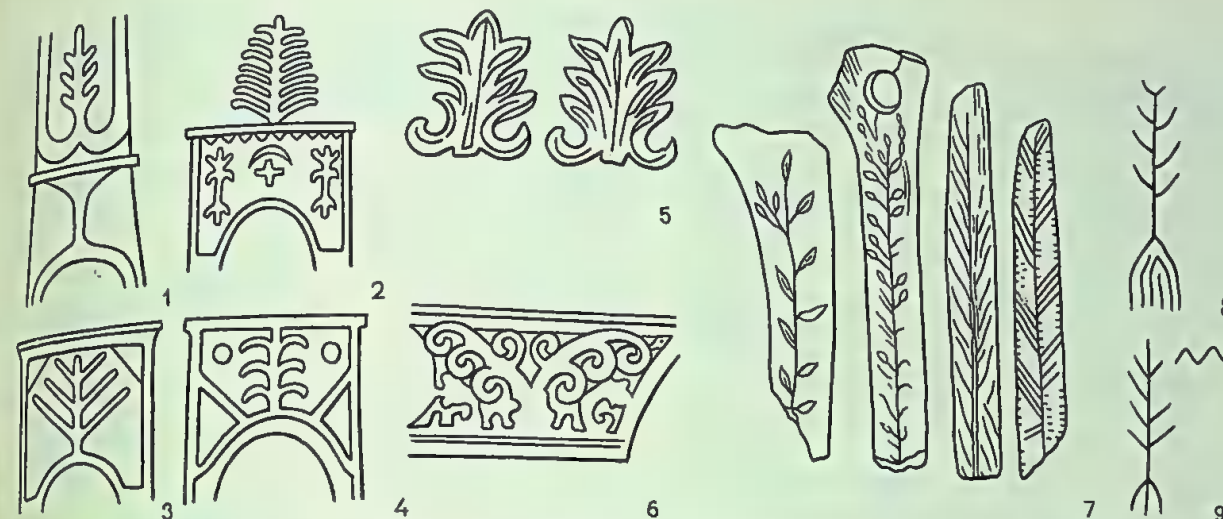


Fig. 337. Symbolic Tree of Life representations: 1-4 — Daghestan [139, p. 83]; 5 — Georgia [602, p. 27]; 6 — Russia [308, p. 152]; 7, 8 — France, ca 15000-10000 BC [659a, p. 228]; 9 — Denmark, ca 7000 BC [748, c. 404].

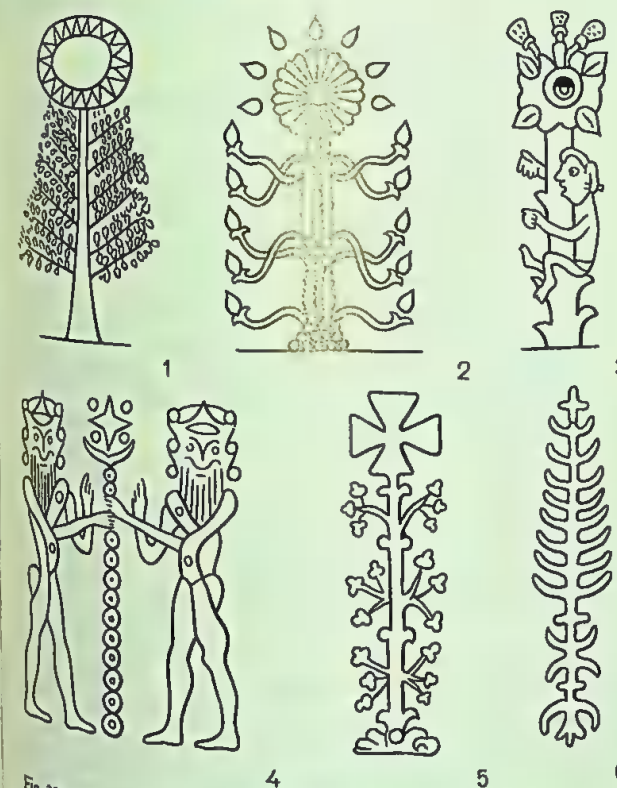


Fig. 338. Tree of Life with sun or heaven emblem: 1 — Ancient Egypt [748, p. 387]; 2 — Assyria [748, p. 393]; 3 — Ancient Mexico [657a, pl. 26]; 4 — Mesopotamia [635, pl. 4]; 5 — Sweden, Middle Ages [748, p. 382]; 6 — Daghestan, clay relief on a fireplace, Burdeki, ca 1920.

Pictorial representations of the sacred tree were an important motif in the cult iconography of Ancient Mesopotamia. These images are always stylized, rather than naturalistic, suggesting that they represented a certain conception, rather than an actual plant. The oldest known Mesopotamian representation of the sacred tree, from the fourth millennium B.C., has leaves, but the general design is stylized: it consists of a vertical trunk and six arched branches, on the whole a

prototype of the Judaic seven-branched candelabrum; this design became increasingly schematized in the course of time [769, Figs. 43, 63]. In many Mesopotamian representations, the sacred tree consists of a vertical rod with slanting branch-like rods ending in little circles, usually seven in number [769, Figs. 60, 61]. It may be assumed that the latter depict apples spiked on sticks. In some images the stylized boughs support, instead of the little circles, tongue-shaped pieces which might represent flames (Fig. 338: 2). The apples and the flames would then be interchangeable, both being attributes of the underworld god. Hence the modern custom of illuminating the Christmas tree.

The veneration of sacred trees is common to many cultures [606, pp. 449-453]. The contents of the respective myths and rites point to their association with the image of the World Tree. The Rig-Veda and Edda hymns mention a snake dwelling amidst the roots of a certain tree, which reach down into unfathomed depths; the tree's summit reaches the sky, represented by birds. The Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, one of the earliest existing literary monuments, offers the following information that tree: "At its roots, the snake who cannot be invoked made its nest, in its branches the bird Imdugud hatched her nestlings, and within its trunk the maiden Lilith built her home" [193, p. 83]. The image of the tree with the snake beneath it and the bird in its branches is encountered in both Russian and American Indian folklore. The image of the cosmic tree as well as the notion it personifies of the three-level structure of the universe, a myth common to all mankind. A Mesolithic representation of a tree with roots and a snake (Fig. 337: 9) is of interest here. It can be assumed that this is the World Tree of ancient myths and legends [371a, p. 396-406], among the roots of which dwells the serpent.

From allusions in the legends of various peoples it may be presumed that the World Tree was thought to be an incarnation of the Great Goddess [728, p. 163; 802, pp. 54, 80], probably because she was considered mistress not only of heaven but of all nature. The predetermination of human destinies was associated with the World Tree [857, p. 76], for they depended on the Great Goddess. Trees whose fruit or trunk contained milk-like juice, apparently likened to the milk of the Great Mother of the world,

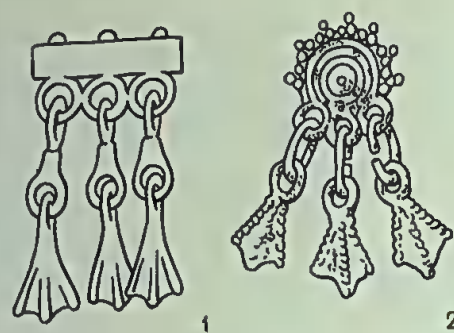


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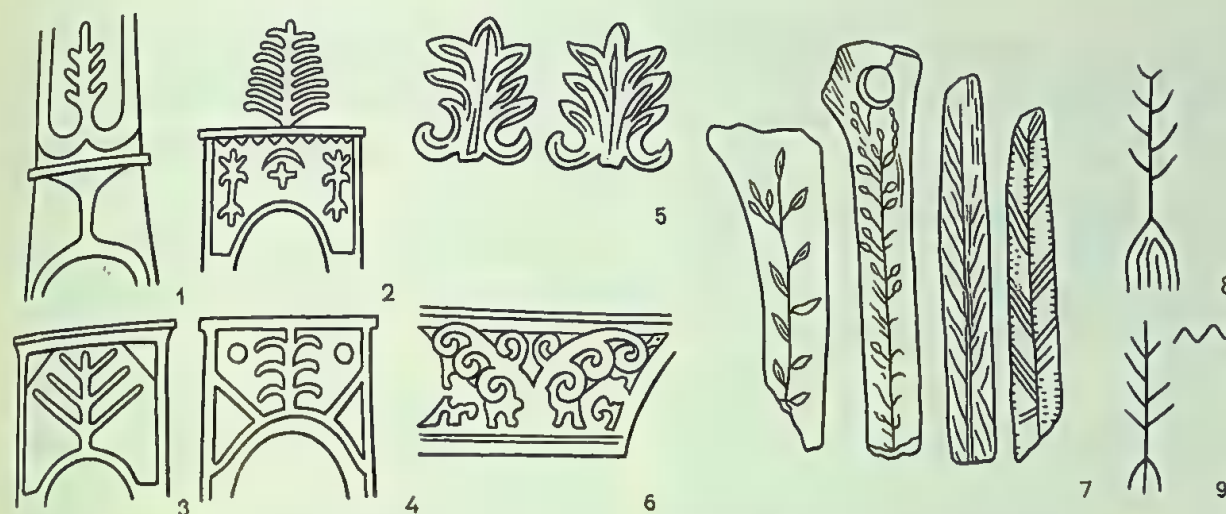


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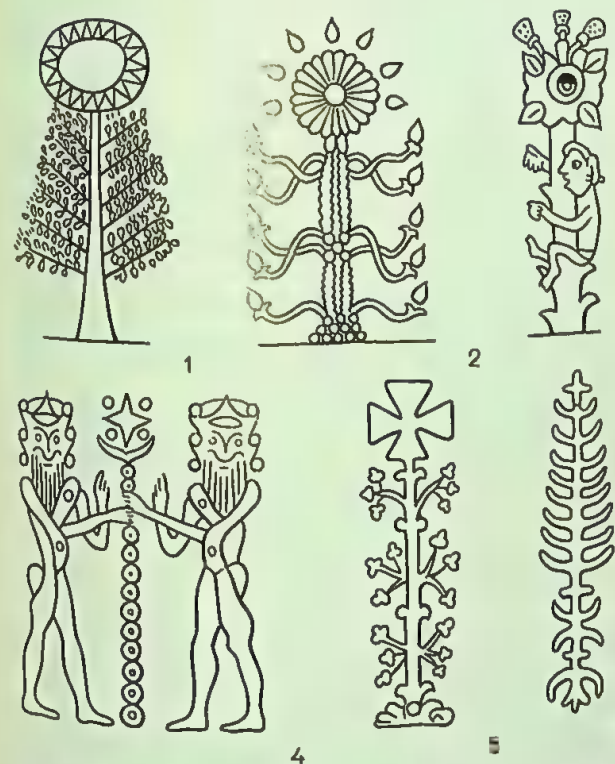


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were considered particularly sacred [756, pp. 171-175]. In the Rig-Veda, the World Tree is compared to a woman who gives birth. According to Yakutian myths, the spirit of the goddess of childbirth dwells in the tree [193, p. 84]. In Georgian folk art, the Tree of Life motif is linked to the cult of the Great Mother [586, p. 186]. In Ancient India the supreme goddess was generally symbolized by the sacred tree; calendar festivals dedicated to the sacred tree are feminine in India [97, pp. 251, 252]. In Ancient Egypt the veneration of female deities was associated with a tree cult [251, p. 26]. An Egyptian myth taught that the goddess Nut dwelt in a "heavenly tree" [639, p. 60].

Inanna of Sumer says about herself: "My father gave me the heavens, he gave me the earth. He has crowned me with the heavens, and the earth he put, like sandals, on my feet" [724, p. 138]. Since the World Tree was pictured as an incarnation of the goddess, an earth sign was sometimes placed on the legs of female statuettes, implying that the goddess' legs were the roots of the tree within the ground; the goddess was also depicted with snake-like legs, for the ground is the dwelling place of the serpent. The top of the tree, reaching the sky, was the goddess' head. This notion is recorded in an image of a tree with a heaven symbol at the top (Fig. 338: 1). During the Bronze Age the heaven symbol was reinterpreted as a solar sign, so that the tree was now depicted with a solar rosette (Fig. 338: 2). The cross became a common solar symbol during the Bronze Age, so since the heaven symbol at the top of the tree was already perceived as a solar symbol, another solar symbol — the cross — replaced it at the top of the sacred tree (Fig. 338: 4-6). The present-day Christmas tree crowned with a star was once a pagan fetish — the sacred tree with the heaven or sun symbol.

The Sumerian text quoted above connected the mythical tree with a maiden named Lilith. Lilith was an Assyro-Babylonian evil female demon. In Arabian tales, Lilith is the devil's wife. The ancient Hebrews believed that Lilith was an evil spirit in the image of a winged and hairy woman, particularly dangerous to children. The name Lilith may be compared to the ancient Libyan *lilu* ('water') [210a, p. 32]. Lithuanian *lieti* ('to pour') and *lyti* ('to rain') suggest that Lilith of the Ancient East was a vestige of the goddess of heavenly moisture, older than Sumerian mythology, i.e., the Great Goddess. The name of Lilith presumably does not originate from words for 'water, pour, rain,' but, conversely, these words derive from the goddess' name *l-t*, the feminine form of the god's name *l*.

J. Frazer presents numerous examples in his work *The Golden Bough* illustrating a semantic relationship between the tree and the female image. As a personification of the goddess, the tree was associated with femininity in general. In myths of some peoples, women originated from trees or the spirit of the tree was female [424, pp. 16, 17]. In Slavic mythology and representational folk art, "the woman is as if organically, inseparably bound with the tree; sometimes she fuses with it and sometimes is replaced by a symbol of it... This is not simply a woman, but a goddess, the queen of heaven and earth. This is apparently the Tree of Life" [120, pp. 12, 18].

All these data on the meaning of the ancient image of the tree, as well as the above evidence on the mythi-

cization of stone, explain the origin of the stone and tree veneration that existed in the Caucasus until the middle of the twentieth century; this is a rudiment of the archaic cult of the earth god and heaven goddess.

Probably because the deceased were regarded as returning to the Great Mother, funeral rites developed such as burying under a tree, interring in the crown or hollow of a tree, sealing the dead body in a tree trunk, in a log, and, finally, placing it in a wooden coffin. True, there is an opinion that the coffin derived from an underground wooden chamber which imitated a dwelling. However, even peoples whose ancestors never built such wooden chambers buried their dead in coffins. For example, medieval stone tombs in the Caucasus mountains imitating dwellings in shape were found to contain skeletons, especially of infants, in coffins made from the two hollowed halves of a tree trunk.

The Slavs and Latvians had an odd custom: at cult festivals, a specially designated girl stood on one foot. In India, standing on one foot expressed the idea of fertility [193, p. 112]. The posture presumably symbolized the World Tree, an incarnation of the Great Goddess. In Japan, rites for field work included dancing on one foot, which, as pointed out by C. Sachs, is magic intended to stimulate growth [819, p. 31]. When saying a Judaic prayer one should keep one's legs close together, as if they were a single straight leg.

The birch tree represented the goddess in Russia. In old Russia, cult rituals involved riding horses while holding birch twigs [575, p. 227]. In spring, girls brought gifts to birch trees. "A woman's dress is put on the birch tree which is worshiped as a goddess of spring, or a girl is adorned with birch branches, while others dance around her, stamping their feet like horses" [465, p. 57]. The goddess represented by the birch was considered a cause of death, so that this tree was associated in Scotland with the notion of the beyond. The goddess was inimical to children, and for punishment children were beaten with birch switches (it is quite possible that this stemmed from a wish to pay the goddess a lesser tribute in order to avoid worse troubles). Apparently the birch became a fetish of the Great Goddess because of its white bark, white being her symbol.

The words for 'birch' in Indo-European languages (the Russian *beryoza*, Old English *bierce*, Lithuanian *beržas*, Old Prussian *berse*, etc.) are relatively new formations with no parent form in the Nostratic language [210a, p. 300]. An opinion has been offered that they derive from the Proto-Indo-European **b(h)erk* ('to be white') [108a, p. 619]; but it appears more likely that both the appellation for the goddess' sacred tree and the word for white, her symbolic color, originate from the name of the goddess **b.r.t/s* which, in turn, can be traced to the name of her spouse **b.r* with the feminine ending *-t*.

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In Daghestanian architecture, the pillar and the bolster capital crowning it are decorated with ornamental carving. At a later stage of the evolution of folk art, over the last centuries, this ornamentation is no more than decorative, yet its archaic elements, which still survive, allow us to trace it back to ancient symbols of specific meaning. There is nearly always some certain symbol of the Great Goddess among them, such as a rosette or oblique cross (Fig. 217: 2).

Sometimes there are symbols of the deity not only in designs on the pillar or on the bolster, but in the post's shape itself. A pillar of a unique form was found in Daghestan (Fig. 339: 1). It is most unlikely that this shape arose from the individual imagination of the workman who produced it. In traditional architecture there was no arbitrary creation of shapes, such as is typical of modern architecture as well as contemporary folk construction. In the past, architectural forms and forms in folk art were based on tradition and originated in a specific cause. Indeed, the pillar shape with curved struts discovered in Daghestan is not the only one of its kind; it is also encountered in the ancient architecture of Ossetia and Russia (Fig. 339: 2, 4). These examples, so widely separated territorially, point to a concept once common to many nations.

were considered particularly sacred [756, pp. 171-175]. In the Rig-Veda, the World Tree is compared to a woman who gives birth. According to Yakutian myths, the spirit of the goddess of childbirth dwells in the tree [193, p. 84]. In Georgian folk art, the Tree of Life motif is linked to the cult of the Great Mother [586, p. 186]. In Ancient India the supreme goddess was generally symbolized by the sacred tree; calendar festivals dedicated to the sacred tree are feminine in India [97, pp. 251, 252]. In Ancient Egypt the veneration of female deities was associated with a tree cult [251, p. 26]. An Egyptian myth taught that the goddess Nut dwelt in a "heavenly tree" [639, p. 60].

Inanna of Sumer says about herself: "My father gave me the heavens, he gave me the earth. He has crowned me with the heavens, and the earth he put, like sandals, on my feet" [724, p. 138]. Since the World Tree was pictured as an incarnation of the goddess, an earth sign was sometimes placed on the legs of female statuettes, implying that the goddess' legs were the roots of the tree within the ground; the goddess was also depicted with snake-like legs, for the ground is the dwelling place of the serpent. The top of the tree, reaching the sky, was the goddess' head. This notion is recorded in an image of a tree with a heaven symbol at the top (Fig. 338: 1). During the Bronze Age the heaven symbol was reinterpreted as a solar sign, so that the tree was now depicted with a solar rosette (Fig. 338: 2). The cross became a common solar symbol during the Bronze Age, so since the heaven symbol at the top of the tree was already perceived as a solar symbol, another solar symbol — the cross — replaced it at the top of the sacred tree (Fig. 338: 4-6). The present-day Christmas tree crowned with a star was once a pagan fetish — the sacred tree with the heaven or sun symbol.

The Sumerian text quoted above connected the mythical tree with a maiden named Lilith. Lilith was an Assyro-Babylonian evil female demon. In Arabian tales, Lilith is the devil's wife. The ancient Hebrews believed that Lilith was an evil spirit in the image of a winged and hairy woman, particularly dangerous to children. The name Lilith may be compared to the ancient Libyan *lilu* ('water') [210a, p. 32]. Lithuanian *lieti* ('to pour') and *lyti* ('to rain') suggest that Lilith of the Ancient East was a vestige of the goddess of heavenly moisture, older than Sumerian mythology, i.e., the Great Goddess. The name of Lilith presumably does not originate from words for 'water, pour, rain,' but, conversely, these words derive from the goddess' name *lil*, the feminine form of the god's name *l*.

J. Frazer presents numerous examples in his work *The Golden Bough* illustrating a semantic relationship between the tree and the female image. As a personification of the goddess, the tree was associated with femininity in general. In myths of some peoples, women originated from trees or the spirit of the tree was female [424, pp. 16, 17]. In Slavic mythology and representational folk art, "the woman is as if organically, inseparably bound with the tree; sometimes she fuses with it and sometimes is replaced by a symbol of it... This is not simply a woman, but a goddess, the queen of heaven and earth. This is apparently the Tree of Life" [120, pp. 12, 18].

All these data on the meaning of the ancient image of the tree, as well as the above evidence on the mythi-

cization of stone, explain the origin of the stone and tree veneration that existed in the Caucasus until the middle of the twentieth century; this is a rudiment of the archaic cult of the earth god and heaven goddess.

Probably because the deceased were regarded as returning to the Great Mother, funeral rites developed such as burying under a tree, interring in the crown or hollow of a tree, sealing the dead body in a tree trunk, in a log, and, finally, placing it in a wooden coffin. True, there is an opinion that the coffin derived from an underground wooden chamber which imitated a dwelling. However, even peoples whose ancestors never built such wooden chambers buried their dead in coffins. For example, medieval stone tombs in the Caucasus mountains imitating dwellings in shape were found to contain skeletons, especially of infants, in coffins made from the two hollowed halves of a tree trunk.

The Slavs and Latvians had an odd custom: at cult festivals, a specially designated girl stood on one foot. In India, standing on one foot expressed the idea of fertility [193, p. 112]. The posture presumably symbolized the World Tree, an incarnation of the Great Goddess. In Japan, rites for field work included dancing on one foot, which, as pointed out by C. Sachs, is magic intended to stimulate growth [819, p. 31]. When saying a Judaic prayer one should keep one's legs close together, as if they were a single straight leg.

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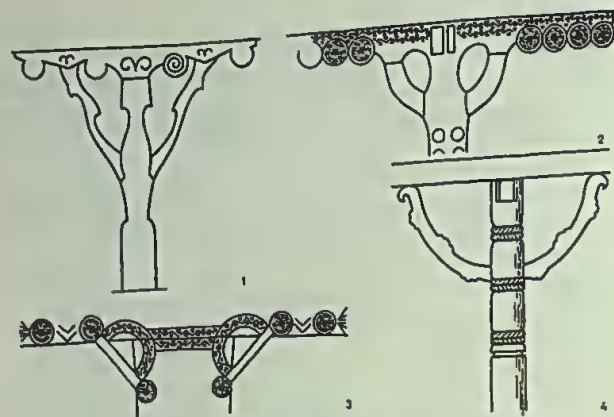


Fig. 339. Pillars with braces: 1 — Daghestan, Tiyarata [376, p. 148]; 2 — Ossetia [573, p. 11]; 3 — Georgia [589a, p. 4]; 4 — Northern Russia, 18th c.

The pillar with struts is, generally speaking, a building method used from Western Europe to India. The struts are effective, however, only if they resist longitudinal pressure; to this end, they must be straight and sufficiently strong. If, on the other hand, the struts are carved up (Fig. 339: 1), curved (Fig. 339: 2, 4), or too slender (Fig. 339: 3), they do not meet constructional requirements. Therefore, their purpose is symbolic. It is noteworthy that pillars with non-structural struts are encountered in different cultures, unrelated and separated by vast expanses.

Similar structural forms emerge independently as solutions to similar technical problems, yet similarities in forms unaccountable by practical purposes cannot be thus explained. Neither can they be due to chance coincidence, since variants of forms not conditioned by practical requirements are infinite, so if human thought chose only some of them, there must have been certain reasons behind the choice.

One can readily observe that the Daghestanian pillar and the pillar in Northern Russia resemble a female silhouette with raised hands. Such an image was quite common in ancient iconography. This posture was not so much that of persons appealing to the gods, as of the gods themselves. We have here representations of a female deity.

Why did the pillar in the home symbolize a woman? Two hypotheses can be advanced. Firstly, the origin of such a notion could be in that the household depends on the woman as the roof of the building rests on the pillar; the Avars, for instance, have a tale containing the following words: "Why do you have such a big pillar?" — "The pillar is the wife, it holds up the house" [357, p. 9]. Secondly, there could be other associations: the pillar supports the roof of the house as the World Tree supports the heavens. The ancient Teutons worshiped a sacred column, which, according to a ninth century Saxon chronicle, symbolized the world pillar, the support of the universe [830, p. 107]. The central post in American Indian dwellings symbolized the World Tree [781, p. 26], which is the fulcrum of the universe, a pillar holding up the heavens [748, pp. 388, 389]. One post in Japanese homes differed from the others: all the pillars were strictly cylindrical in shape, with carefully smoothed surfaces, while one remained in its natural form, with curvatures and irregularities; it

symbolized nature. It is of interest that this post was not a supporting one: it was there as a decoration.

There is evidence for the assumption that the pillar was in fact a symbol of a female deity. Western Semites called the sacred pillar *ašerah*, the name of a Phoenician goddess, the spouse of Baal. Her idols were usually placed under trees. *Ašerah* is identified in Jewish tradition with the Canaanite *Aštareth*, i.e., Astarte. In Georgia, the supporting pillar of the house is called *dāda-bodzi*, which means "mother pillar." In a Daghestan custom, when the last tribute is paid to the deceased, the oldest woman relative sits in the middle of the room, in a place referred to as *orta-baganá*, the "place of a pillar" [105, p. 74]. The Daghestanians believed that the pillar in the middle of the dwelling contained the spirit of the mythical big-breasted, long-haired "woman AI", patroness of the house and at the same time a forest demon, mistress of wild animals [17, p. 157; 560, p. 66]. In the Evenkian (Siberia) language, the words for the World Tree, for the bearing pillar of the dwelling, and for the place of the hostess of the house are related [24, p. 45].

The head of the Egyptian heaven goddess Hat-hor was portrayed on pillars. In Tabasaran, a region in Daghestan, supporting pillars have capitals in the shape of an upturned triangle; analogies are known in Iran, where a pillar resembles in appearance the silhouette of a tree with the crown expanding upwards (Fig. 68: 5). A typical Central Asian column having a spherical detail in the lower part with a neck over it, and a capital decorated with a plant ornament, is a stylized representation of a plant in a jar of water [99, pp. 92, 93; 123, p. 144]; this plant would then be the World Tree. In the architecture of Ancient Egypt, columns whose shapes involve plant forms are not architectonic: their appearance does not express the idea of bearing a load; these columns' shape is clearly symbolic, and must be associated with the worship of sacred trees and with the conception of the pillar as a fetish of the goddess. This would also be the origin of the Corinthian bell-shaped capital enveloped by acanthus leaves in Greco-Roman architecture.

It must be pointed out that the tree image sometimes appears as an attribute not only of the Great Goddess, but also of her consort, the earth god. Certain trees, such as the oak, chestnut, and apple tree, figure in this latter function.²²⁰

The forest was also associated with the underworld god. In the mythologies of various peoples, the "master of the forest" possesses features of this deity. Words for 'forest' and 'mountain' are etymologically related in many languages [371b, p. 49], and the mountain, as shown above, was the abode of the earth god.

²²⁰ See chapter "The Black God."

THE SACRED TRIAD

A three-element composition emerged in Western Asia, consisting of a female figure in the middle and two male figures on her sides. This theme became widespread in Europe and Western Asia (Fig. 340). It was remarkably persistent, even in smaller details: in a Hittite relief, the flanking figures wear horned helmets (Fig. 340: 1), while in a Nogayan embroidery²²¹ made three and a half thousand years later, they have horns, too (Fig. 340: 5).

Many Western Asian representations of this triad dating from 1500 to 500 B.C. contain a winged disk in the top part (Figs. 340: 1; 350: 2). This latter emblem was by then probably perceived as a solar symbol, but it was a heaven symbol by origin. In pictorial representations from various ancient cultures, a heaven sign of one kind or another was sometimes placed above the goddess' head (Fig. 372: 3, 4). In three-element designs, a heaven sign also occasionally appears above the head of the female figure; this sign has been mistaken for a solar sign (for example, a ring in Fig. 340: 4).

In Russia a pictorial motif of a goddess with god companions or "by-gods," (a term coined for the lateral figures by the archeologist V. Gorodtsov who studied this motif in Russian art) is also known. Myths, beliefs, and cult symbols could have penetrated from Western Asia to the eastern Slavs through the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia. There is nothing odd about the fact that a rich stratum of ancient cult symbolism was formed in Daghestan, at the very center of the ethnocultural melting-pot over thousands of years. What is really striking is the fact that these symbols are also found in pre-Columbian America. We have given many examples of transatlantic analogies; here are a few more.

The Neolithic goddess appears in myths and traditions as an inscrutable spirit from whom one can hope for favors, but must expect misfortune. Some three-element compositions record this particular image of the goddess, such as an Etruscan picture in which she figures as a ferocious Gorgon (Fig. 341: 1). She was not infrequently



Fig. 340. Triad with goddess: 1 — Hittite relief, ca 2000 BC [802, pl. 4]; 2 — vessel of ca. 1500 BC, Czechia [159, p. 272]; 3 — embroidery, Volga region [342, p. 169]; 4 — ancient Grecian stela [802, p. 117]; 5 — Nogayan (northwest of Caspian Sea) embroidery.

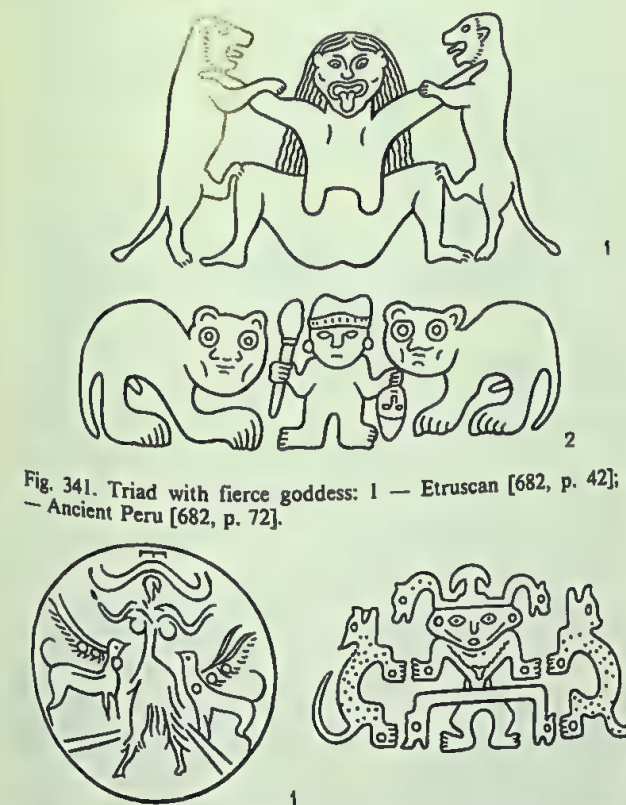


Fig. 341. Triad with fierce goddess: 1 — Etruscan [682, p. 42]; 2 — Ancient Peru [682, p. 72].



Fig. 342. Triad with snake-headed goddess: 1 — Ancient Crete [676e, p. 169]; 2 — Ancient Peru [630, p. 35].



Fig. 343. Triad with winged goddess: 1 — Greece, ca 700 BC [845, p. 286]; 2 — Scythian (Ukraine), ca 400 BC [30, p. 67].

²²¹ The Nogayans are an ethnic group of Turkic-Mongolian origin, populating the steppe northwest of the Caspian Sea.



Fig. 344. Triad with Tree of Life: 1 — medieval Georgian bas-relief from Ingushetia [50, pl. 2]; 2 — Ancient Iran [716, p. 165]; 3 — Greece, ca 1200 BC [298, p. 120]; 4 — Hittite [689, p. 296].

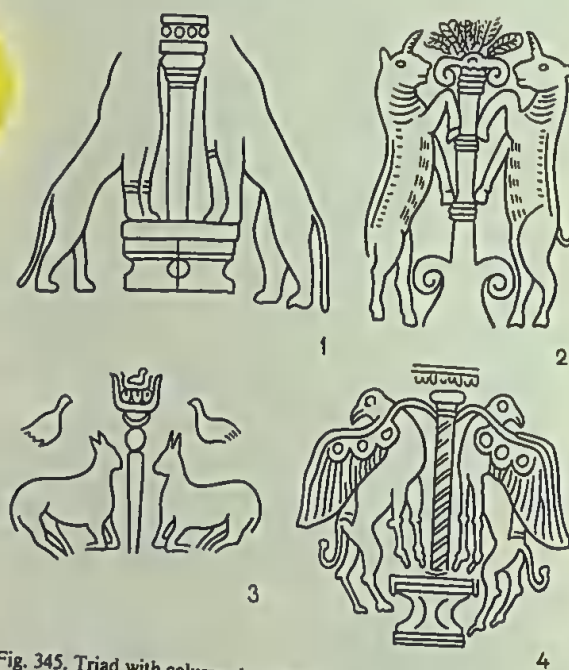


Fig. 345. Triad with column: 1 — Mycenae, ca 1500 BC; 2 — Assyria [848, p. 22]; 3 — Mycenae [849, p. 110]; 4 — Ancient Crete [676d, p. 511].

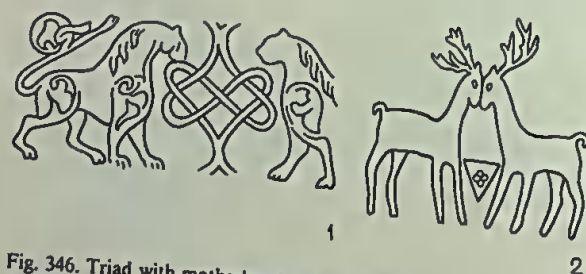


Fig. 346. Triad with motherhood sign: 1 — Daghestan, Kubachi [54, pl. 29]; 2 — Carpathian Ukraine [470, p. 59].

pictured as strangling the animals or birds flanking her (Fig. 343: 1). In a picture from pre-Columbian America (Fig. 341: 2), the goddess is shown with a mace in one hand and a cut-off human head in the other.

In Crete the goddess was portrayed with snakes in her hair (Fig. 342: 1). The three-figure scene with a snake-headed goddess was known in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 342: 2). Moreover, in both cases there is a sign like an upside down Russian letter III above the goddess' head; this is a sign of rain, a symbol of heaven, an emblem of the goddess.

The goddess in the three-figure composition is sometimes portrayed with wings (Fig. 343). She is frequently replaced by the Tree of Life (Fig. 344); sometimes the latter is exchanged for its equivalent, the column (Fig. 345). Three-element compositions in which the goddess is symbolized by a column are typical of Eastern Mediterranean antiquity. Two symmetrical birds with a column between them compose a heraldic motif encountered in Byzantine art [866, p. 609].

Being the mother goddess, she was designated by signs symbolizing the concept of birth; in Figure 346: 1 it is the umbilical cord, in Figure 346: 2 the female generative organ.

The goddess' emblem could be a star (Fig. 347: 1) which was a symbol of Ishtar in Mesopotamia, or a crescent (Fig. 347: 2), for the moon was correlated with the female deity in Classical Antiquity.

In a Daghestanian relief the central figure is a fish (Fig. 348: 4) which is a creature personifying the water element. In another case a fish appears on the goddess' figure (Fig. 355: 1).

The goddess could be represented by water symbols as water was associated with the female principle during the Neolithic (heavenly moisture, Fig. 348: 1) and Bronze Age (terrestrial waters, Fig. 348: 2). In the second of these designs, the central element of the triad is a rectangle with zigzags, the ideograph of earth washed by waters. A more recent variant of this triad can be seen on the façade of the altar portion of some medieval Armenian and Georgian churches (Fig. 348: 3); this decorative detail was considered an emblem of the Virgin Mother. Rhombuses with a dot, signs of earth, are here the lateral elements in the triad. In the three-figure composition, the female figure in the center is always flanked by male ones. Here the rhombus with a dot has retained the male meaning which it had during the Neolithic. But sometimes the goddess is represented by an earth sign (Fig. 349), for earth was correlated with the female deity since the Bronze Age.



Fig. 347. Triad with heavenly luminary sign: 1 — Ancient Crete [298, p. 120]; 2 — Roman period [802, pl. 6].

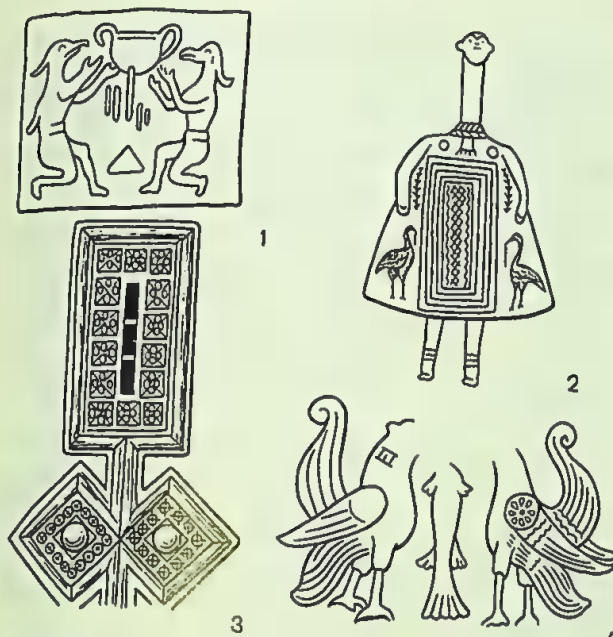


Fig. 348. Triad with water sign: 1 — Sumer [635, pl. 2]; 2 — Greece, ca 800 BC [719, p. 65]; 3 — relief on façades of Georgian and Armenian churches, 13th c.; 4 — Daghestan, Kubachi [54, pl. 37].



Fig. 349. Triad with earth sign: 1 — Russia, ca 1000 CE [463, p. 101]; 2 — Ancient Iran, Bronze Age [716, pl. 17]; 3 — Northern Russia [103, p. 86]; 4 — Greece, ca 1000 BC [456, p. 47].



Fig. 350. Triad with sun or heaven symbol: 1 — Daghestan, Bejta, ca 800 BC [134, p. 311]; 2 — Hittite, ca 2000 BC [631, pl. 225].

As can be seen, the symbolism of the Neolithic goddess is adapted in the three-element composition to cult notions that took shape during the post-Neolithic. This is confirmed by a Daghestanian example from the first millennium B.C. (Fig. 350: 1), in which the middle element of the triad, a symbol of the World Tree, is topped with a disk bearing a swastika, a solar symbol.

What was the idea behind the figurative motif of the three-element composition? One opinion is that the goddess expressed the female principle, personifying the source of life on earth, and that she was impregnated by the male deity, the Sun, to whom in many pictorial representations she raises her hands as if in prayer [120, pp. 19-22]. During the Bronze period and later, the female figure in such triads may have been perceived as an earth deity and the symbol above it as a solar sign. But what of numerous examples of other triads, without the female figure and without the solar sign?

M. Nilsson, who advocates rationalistic interpretation of ancient cult images, believes that the triad with a column in the middle represented the façade of a sanctuary with two sacrificial animals or guardian genii [787, p. 219]; but this interpretation does not explain other variants of the composition, without the column. M. Mammayev interprets the triad with horses flanking the middle figure as "two horses in fight" [370, p. 23]. But when these are not horses, but birds, or fallow deer, or sphinxes? And why "fight," why not "friendship"?

In many cases the lateral elements of the triad are birds. This is a stable motif not only in the three-element compositions being discussed, but also in a number of myths; for example, both the Rig-Veda and Teutonic legends tell about certain two birds in a tree. In interpreting this motif, G. Wilke declared that the two birds are the sun and the moon, the tree is the heavens, and the fruit on its branches are stars which are also the souls of the dead [857, p. 77]. This deciphering, unsubstantiated by argumentation, only shows how the author allowed himself to be carried away by his fantasies.

The tendency to fantasize is quite human. It manifests itself not only in the way some modern authors interpret obscure graphemes, but also in the way the same thing was done in ancient times. Neolithic symbolism was misinterpreted (or, for that matter, reinterpreted) in the post-Neolithic period. Later, adherents of new religions indulged in fantasies concerning images they could not understand. For instance, the triad consisting of two deer and a wheel between them was interpreted in Buddhism as a representation of two deer who, as the legend goes, were the first to have listened to Buddha's homilies; the wheel is understood in this case as a symbol of Buddhist dogma.

The semantic significance of the by-gods accompanying the goddess remains an enigma. A. Ambroz thought they were the goddess' spouses; this notion is not supported by argumentation. Moreover, it follows from concepts reflecting post-Neolithic beliefs that the earth goddess was impregnated by the heaven god, whose position is higher in the divine hierarchy than her own, whereas the by-gods are clearly inferior to her. A. Frothingham suggested that they were also deities, if secondary ones, because

they were frequently depicted worshipping the goddess. V. Gorodtsov, holding the same opinion, added, proceeding from his observation that in Russian art these figures often appear as riders, that they might symbolize earthly rulers being blessed by the goddess. J. Przylusky suggests that the two animals flanking the goddess express allegorically the idea of man's taming some animals and putting others



Fig. 351. Triad with winged demigods: 1 — Assyria [410, p. 33]; 2 — Iran, ca 1000 BC [391, p. 265]; 3 — Central Asia, ca 700 CE [206, p. 15]; 4 — Assyria [617, p. 152].



Fig. 352. Triad with pair of birds: 1 — Daghestan, Kalakoreish [156, pl. 17]; 2 — Daghestan, Amuzghi; 3 — Scythian vessel of Greek production, ca 400 BC [283, p. 236]; 4 — Armenia, ca 800 CE [212, p. 31].



Fig. 353. Triad with pair of animals: 1 — Georgia, ca 700 CE [602, p. 33]; 2 — Russia, 19th c. [19, p. 69].

to death [802, p. 96]; this judgment, however, is totally unfounded.

The side figures in the triad were not infrequently depicted winged (Fig. 351); they must therefore have been celestial beings. According to notions generally adopted in the course of time, the goddess personified earth. Perhaps the by-gods descended to her from heaven? They sometimes appear accompanied by solar signs (Fig. 355: 1). Are they envoys to the earth goddess from the heaven or sun god to announce a forthcoming event? In the Christian myth of the conception of Christ, God does not himself appear before Mary, but first dispatches the Archangel Gabriel; it cannot be ruled out that some pagan motifs were reflected in this legend.

The by-gods are in most cases represented as animals, riders, or birds (Fig. 352). The rider is an image of the bright deity. If the messengers of the sun were pictured as horses (Fig. 353: 2), this may also be accounted for by the assumption that the horse was a creature associated with the sun. Indo-Europeans considered the bird to be a solar creature as well. Arriving in March, birds are perceived as heralds of spring, of the period when the sun, regarded as male in later paganism, gains power. It is thus natural that the messenger of the sun god to Mother Earth should be a rider, a horse, or a bird. Old Russian toy whistles shaped like horses and birds were once cult appurtenances. Some students understand whistling and shouting during the Russian Maslenitsa (Shrovetide) as appeals to the life-giving solar principle [150, p. 55].

Again, these conjectures, based on concepts commonly accepted in the literature, do not go beyond guesswork. Their value is lessened when it appears that they do not agree with certain facts. On the Jewish holiday of Purim, which in some ways parallels Maslenitsa, the ritual noise-making is meant to expel an evil spirit. Some people fire rifles at Shrovetide, most likely to be interpreted as driving someone or something away, but not as summons or appeal.

Versions of the three-figure emblem include a female figure between horse protomes (Fig. 354). Comparing this with the composition in which a disk (the sign of heaven, see Fig. 289: 3) occurs between protomes, shows that the female figure (or the symbols replacing it) in the three-element compositions is the Neolithic heaven goddess, rather than the Indo-European earth goddess. What the corresponding images meant in post-Neolithic times is another matter. However strange this may seem, this is more vague than in reconstructing religious beliefs from earlier periods.

In some Western Asiatic and Eastern Mediterranean versions of the three-figure composition, the by-gods are lions (Fig. 347: 1). Lions appear in this function even in countries where they are not found, for example, Daghestan (Fig. 346: 1), Georgia (Fig. 353: 1),²²² and Russia, which is further proof that the motif is of southern origin.

²²²The art critic N. Aladashvili says this composition is "Daniel in the lions' den" [11, p. 57]. This is a good example of how a scholar can fall into a trap if he analyses an ancient monument without resorting to related examples (a certain archeologist aptly described this as "thinking within the limits of a burial ground being dug up at a given moment").

The lion was an incarnation of the earth god during the Neolithic.²²³

Sometimes wolves figure as by-gods (Fig. 355: 1). In

²²³See chapter "The Black God."



Fig. 354. Goddess and double horse: 1 — Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [537, pl. 134]; 2 — Ancient Armenia [716, p. 175]; 3 — Italy, Bronze Age [719, p. 459]; 4 — ancient Roman portrayal of Epona [807, p. 313]; 5 — fragment of a Daghestan vessel decoration, 1950 [585, p. 29]; 6 — Russia, 19th c. [347, p. 129].

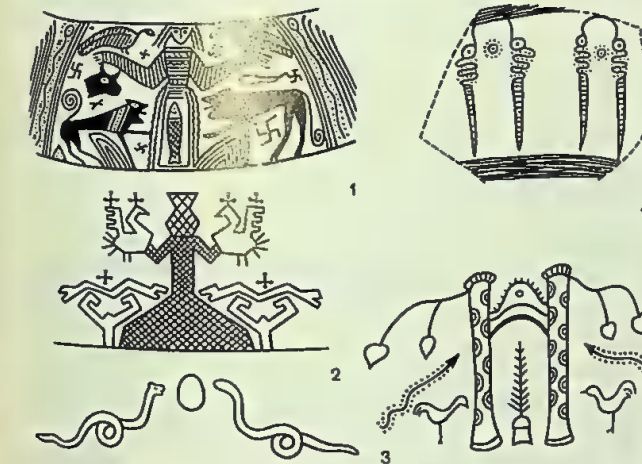


Fig. 355. Triad with snakes: 1 — Greece, ca 700 BC [719, p. 65]; 2 — Russian embroidery [120, p. 10]; 3 — Roman bas-relief [802, pl. 5]; 4 — Mycenae [825, p. 160]; 5 — Spain, ca 500 BC [857, p. 85].

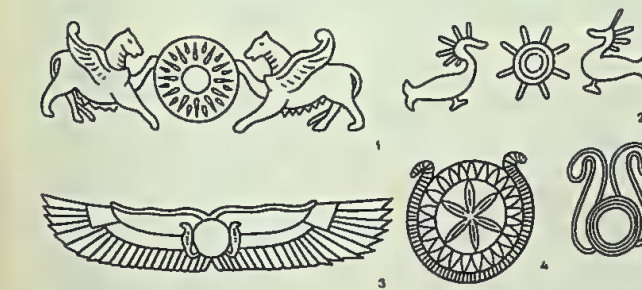


Fig. 356. Heaven symbol with Twins: 1 — Etruscan [692, pl. 396]; 2 — Hallstatt culture [812, p. 57]; 3 — Ancient Egypt [675, p. 13]; 4 — Lithuania, ca 1700 [693, p. 28]; 5 — France, ca 400 BC [744, pl. 139].

ancient mythology the images of the lion and of the wolf were related. In the Caucasus the lion was called the "wolf with a mane" [88, p. 96]. This was probably how the lion was perceived by the Greeks, considering that the wolves in the picture in question are provided with a semblance of a mane. In beliefs going back to the Neolithic, the wolf represented the earth god and thus personified a male deity.

The above hypothetical interpretations of the three-figure composition proceed from the assumption that the goddess personifies the Indo-European Mother Earth and the by-gods are messengers of the sun god. This is not contradicted by cases where the by-gods are birds, horses, or fabulous winged creatures. It may probably be assumed that the lion and the wolf were reinterpreted as incarnations of the solar deity's strength.²²⁴ Yet the goddess (or her symbol) in the three-figure composition may also be accompanied by snakes (Figs. 354: 1; 355). This, as well as the fact that the motif of the goddess with by-gods was popular in Crete, leads to the conclusion that the sacred triad, whatever it became during the Bronze Age, was born of Neolithic beliefs.

In a series of three-figure compositions the disk is the central element (Fig. 356). In no way does it represent the Indo-European earth goddess. In Ancient Egypt two snakes flanking the disk (Fig. 356: 3) were "guards of the sun." This interpretation, however, does not apply to other variants of the triad with snakes. Yet if the disk is interpreted as a heaven symbol, it becomes possible to discover the origin and initial semantics of the sacred triad.

Statuettes of the goddess with two animals were unearthed in the Neolithic settlement of Çatal-Hüyük (Asia Minor, seventh millennium B.C.). One sculpture portrays a pregnant woman with two leopards on whose heads she has laid her hands patronizingly (Fig. 357: 1); another is a woman with two young leopards (Fig. 357: 2). In these cases the leopard cannot be considered a personification of the goddess' spouse: two animals, sometimes cubs, are present. It has been suggested that the statuettes were intended to represent the "mistress of animals" [345, p. 100]. Judging by other versions of the three-figure composition, however, this is the Great Goddess, the heaven goddess, the Great Mother, the progenitor of all things living. The leopard cubs held by the goddess must be her children by the leopard, an incarnation of the earth god. One of the Çatal-Hüyük sanctuaries contained a representation of two leopards with flower-like spots; flowers, as we know, symbolized the fruit of the liaison between the heaven goddess and the earth god (Fig. 357: 3).²²⁵ In Central American myths, the supreme goddess is the mother of leopard twins [371a, p. 517]. The Great Goddess was, indeed, sometimes pictured as a mother of twins (Fig. 60: 2). Stelas over women's graves of the third millennium B.C., found on the territory

²²⁴Such a metamorphosis overtook the image of the dog, which was bound to the underworld god in Neolithic mythology: in post-Neolithic times, it was associated with the solar deity; the Dog of the Sun was one of the appellations of the constellation Canis Major [405, pp. 42, 45].

²²⁵J. Mellaart, who conducted excavations in Çatal-Hüyük, thought these leopards symbolized a heterosexual couple [762, p. 119]. But they show no signs of sex.

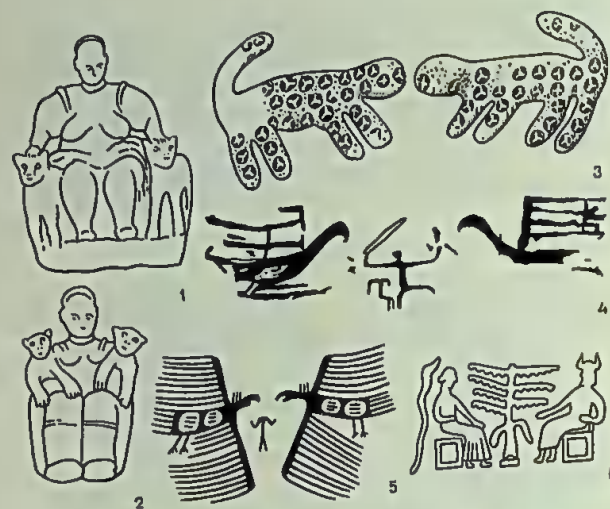


Fig. 357. Proto-images of three-figured composition: 1-5 — Asia Minor, 7000-5000 BC [762, pp. 184, 182, pls. 18, 46, p. 169]; 6 — Babylon, ca 700 BC [857, p. 88].

from France to the Ukraine, sometimes bear images of twins [364, pp. 94, 95]. In the chapter "Janus and the Twins", the conclusion was drawn that the divine twins were sons of the heaven goddess personified by a bird, and of the earth god usually personified by a serpent; consequently, it is these twins who are represented by a pair of birds or a pair of snakes. In India, the two snakes accompanying the symbol of the Great Goddess bear the masculine names Nanda and Upananda; other symbols for them are etymologically associated with the word for 'bull' [802, pp. 98, 99], — and the bull personified the earth god. The horse, too, belonged with the earth god. The Twins of Indian and Greek mythologies were pictured as riders, and in many versions of the sacred triad the goddess is flanked by riders or horses. L. Sternberg offers evidence supporting the assumption that the divine twins were believed to have been fathered by a wolf or by the thundergod [606, p. 80, 83]; both represent the Neolithic earth god. Two wolves or two dogs, connected in certain myths with the World Tree, are interpreted as twins [195, p. 60].

A proto-Indian (pre-Aryan) picture shows a bird flanked by two snakes [97, p. 342]. This composition becomes understandable if the bird is interpreted as an image of the heaven goddess and the two snakes as her children by the god personified as a serpent. An Indian myth tells of two snakes fathered by the god of the North Star [97, p. 259]; the North Star is associated with the underworld god. In one of the Cretan triads (Fig. 342: 1) the goddess is flanked by winged dogs with bird heads; these may be regarded as offspring of the heaven goddess (personified by the bird) and the earth god (the dog being among his representatives).

What lies behind the goddess and her twin children? A notion shared by different peoples is that mothers of twins are endowed with enhanced fertility, not only in bearing children; they are believed to favor fertility in the broad sense of the word. For instance, they were asked to walk over the field before sowing or to start the sowing, to ensure rich crops. In this light, the image of the goddess and the twins could express the idea of fertility.

Some data indicate that in post-Neolithic times as well the two figures flanking the goddess represented the twins. In Ancient Greece, two men with a woman between them (Fig. 340: 4) represented the Dioscuri and their sister. Sometimes one of the two riders flanking the goddess figure rode a dark horse, the other a light-colored one [271, p. 39]. This may be compared to legends considering one of the twins as mortal and the other immortal. The following words are addressed to Ashvinas in the Veda: "With your mysterious power you push the tree in opposite directions" [193, p. 181]; this may allude to the tripartite composition in which the figures at either side of the Tree of Life are twins.

Some scholars believe that the pair of animals in tripartite compositions are of opposite sex, symbolizing propagation, reproduction of life. This may be true to some extent, although in cases where the sex of the animals flanking the goddess is indicated, it is always male (Fig. 341: 2). A picture from Mesopotamia represents a man and a woman, one to other side of the Tree of Life; the serpent is also there, in all likelihood encouraging copulation (Fig. 357: 6). In Russia, the two birds of the sacred triad were sometimes interpreted as a married couple.

Whatever the meaning of the triad during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, it was lost in the course of time, and other associations took its place. The Roman image of a woman between two horses became the goddess Epona, a patroness of horses and riders [807]. In Russian ethnography two animals flanking a plant designate guards of the Tree of Life [473, pp. 92, 94]. In the region along the Danube River, reliefs of the first and second centuries C.E. have been found which portray only one rider approaching the goddess [463, p. 92]; such images were Roman modernizations of the ancient motif.

It seems likely that the canonic sacred triad of the goddess and two by-gods was influenced by certain symmetrical designs, though of different content. For instance, there are pictures in Çatal-Hüyük, which show birds attacking or beheading a man (Figs. 357: 4, 5; 377: 3); if there is a pair of birds, the picture is symmetrical as in the later triads.

The characteristic tripartite ornamentation of Neolithic

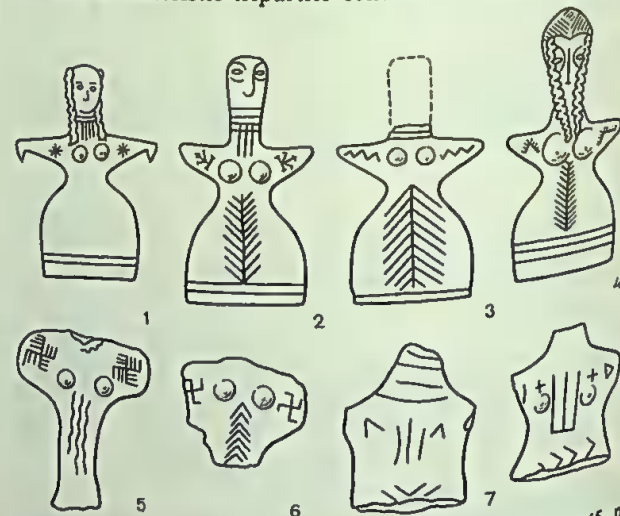


Fig. 358. Neolithic figurines: 1-4 — Southern Turkmenia [345, p. 98]; 5, 6 — Iran [716, pl. 2]; 7, 8 — Balkans [696, p. 116].



Fig. 360. Triad as Great Goddess emblem: 1 — Armenia, ca 700 BC [169, p. 257]; 2 — Etruscan [692, pl. 4].

and take root in a culture, supplanting indigenous characteristics. Traditional Daghestanian art does not tend to portray natural forms. Quite common, the other hand, are versions of the sacred triad in which the elements are represented by symbols.

An ancient ornament from Armenia (Fig. 360: 1) shows two swastikas (masculine signs) and a woman between them (indicated by the triangle at the figure's legs). An Etruscan bronze helmet (Fig. 360: 2) bears the same emblem, but here the side elements are rosettes (now solar symbols, i.e., masculine signs). The middle figure represents a woman; two dots on her sides are a conventional way of depicting female breasts (cf. Fig. 371: 2). The top part of this figure is transformed into something like eyebrows, while the rosettes look like the eyes below. This Etruscan interpretation of the composition must have arisen from associations with the divine image which sometimes decorates ancient pottery (Fig. 76: 2).

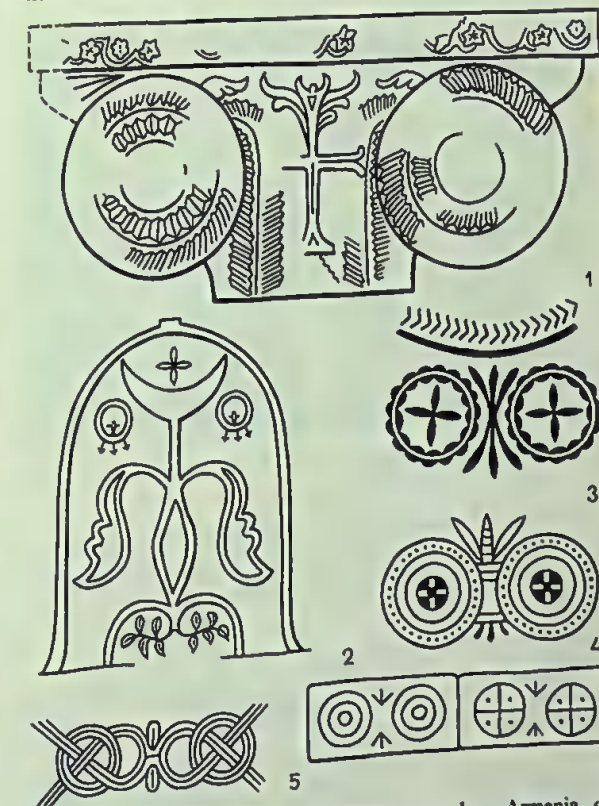


Fig. 361. Triad with plant symbol and rosettes: 1 — Armenia, ca 1900 [323, p. 43; 610, 800 CE [522, p. 64]; 2, 3 — Daghestan, ca 1900 [323, p. 43; 610, 800 CE [522, p. 64]; 4 — Ancient Crete, 12th c. BC [473, p. 105]; 5 — medieval Russia; 6 — Chechenia [797, p. 52].

Fig. 359. Three-figured compositions in Daghestan: 1, 2 — Kubachi, ca 1400 [156, pl. 17]; 3 — coastal Daghestan, ca 500 CE [313, p. 150].

female figurines (Fig. 358) suggests a possible source of the formation of the symmetrical triad. Female figurines with earth signs on their bodies were discussed above (Fig. 158). Sometimes two signs were placed on their shoulders (Fig. 358: 1; 275: 1). There may also be three signs on the statuettes, forming something like a symmetrical triad (Fig. 358: 2-8). These signs cannot always be identified with certainty. Yet in most cases pertaining to Neolithic symbolism, the middle sign seems to be feminine (plant, trident), and the lateral ones masculine (cross, snake, hill with vegetation).

In Daghestan, three-figure compositions usually have a plant as the middle element (Fig. 359). This is evidence of the fact that the emblem was assimilated in Daghestan no earlier than the first half of the first millennium B.C., when this variant became widespread in the Middle East.

Generally speaking, three-figure compositions are not numerous in Daghestan. Nearly all are confined to the village of Kubachi, whose art forms resemble those of Western Asia. Three-figure compositions were never very common in Daghestan, not only because they were brought in from outside; there are many cases when imports spread



Fig. 362. Triad with plant symbols and semi-rosettes: 1 — carved stone, Daghestan, Urkarakh; 2 — Ancient Armenia [340, p. 51].



Fig. 363. Triad as combination of two disks and rhombus: 1 — carved stone of a structure, Daghestan, Kubachi; 2 — Russia, ca 1000 [19, p. 64]; 3 — Georgia, ca 100 CE [21, pl. 20]; 4 — Siberia, ca 1000 BC [578, p. 168]; 5 — pattern on a Kirghizian rug [477, p. 54]; 6 — Armenia, 13th c. [217, pl. 20]; 7 — emblem on chest of Polovtsian (Kumanes) statue.

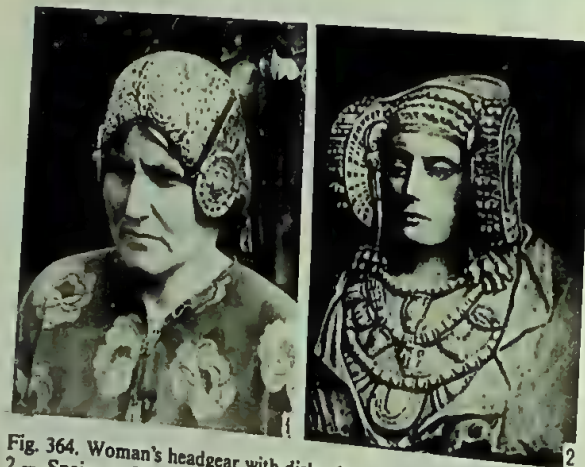


Fig. 364. Woman's headgear with disks: 1 — present-day Daghestan; 2 — Spain, ca 300 BC [216b, p. 9].

All three elements of the sacred triad may be represented by symbolic signs. A nineteenth century Muslim grave stela from Daghestan (Fig. 361: 2) displays pagan symbolism: solar signs with three beams, a plant substituting the goddess, in addition a sign of the moon, her post-Neolithic symbol, and above it a cross — a solar symbol. Figure 361: 1 shows a stone capital of a medieval Christian church in Armenia bearing the same emblem: a feminine symbol in the middle — a plant (transformed into a cross in line with Christian symbolism²²⁶) and on either side a solar rosette,

²²⁶The combination of the cross and the plant may reach back to the Neolithic religion, where the earth god symbolized by the cross was considered the father of the deity of vegetation.



2

which is a male symbol. The triad in which solar signs in the form of a circle with a cross are side elements and the plant sign is at the center, is encountered in Daghestan and Chechnia (Fig. 361: 3, 6).

These latter two designs explain the origin of the X-shaped figure, a middle element in the triad dating from medieval Russia (Fig. 361: 5). Another treatment of this variant of the triad has been found in Crete (Fig. 361: 4). Here the median sign, in contrast to later examples, is asymmetrical: the goddess is represented by the Tree of Life whose upper shoots schematically depict the crown and the lower the roots (cf. Fig. 337: 9).

This emblem can be seen in Figure 362: 1, with half-disks as lateral elements.²²⁷ The same variant of the sacred triad decorates ancient Armenian pottery (Fig. 362: 2); one may make thousands of guesses as to the meaning of this incomprehensible design — to no avail without taking other patterns of the kind into account.

Figure 363: 1 shows another odd stone from Daghestan. The same emblem appears here in even more concise form: the feminine element (rhombus — Mother Earth) is in the middle and the masculine (solar disks) on both sides. This type of sacred triad was common in ancient Georgia and medieval Russia (Fig. 363: 2, 3).

The nomadic tribes which spread from Central Asia in the fifth to twelfth centuries and invaded the Eurasian steppes inhabited by the eastern Indo-European branch, assimilated some of the cult symbols of the previous settlers, without understanding their meaning. The emblem in the form of the rhombus and two disks was sewn by the Polovtsy (nomad Turki-Cumanes) to their clothes, judging by the fact that it appears on their statues. A similar emblem can be seen on medieval Turkmenian tombstones. Kirghizian nineteenth century carpet patterns have a motif of alternating rhombuses and disks, like the medieval Slavic necklace (Fig. 363: 5, cf. Fig. 363: 2).²²⁸

Even now, one can see Daghestanian women wearing a headgear with a square piece of colored or embroidered cloth at the center flanked by two silver rosette disks (Fig. 364: 1). The head covering with two rosettes at the sides was worn by women in Western Europe two thousand

²²⁷It is not by chance that this relief was carved with such care. The triangle with an ornamental design is evidence that this object was meant to be placed above the entrance to the house, like the tympanum over the Lion Gates in the Mycenaean acropolis (Fig. 151: 5).

²²⁸M. Ryndin interprets this diagram as "a yurt (field tent) with abundant pearl adornments" [477, Table 54].

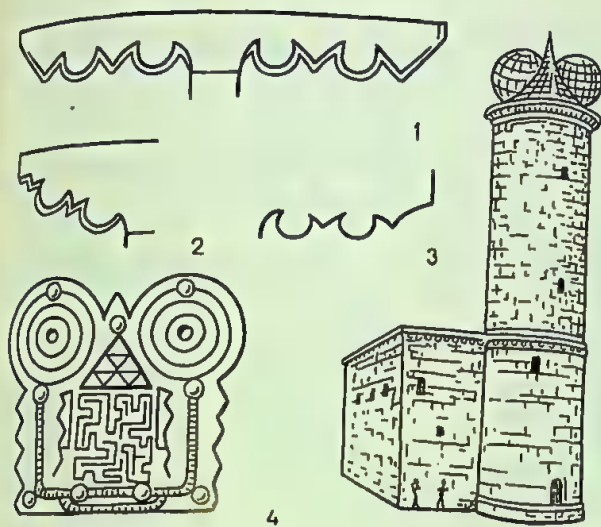


Fig. 365. Triad as combination of disks and triangles: 1 — widespread type of bolster capital in Daghestan; 2 — Georgia [59, pl. 169]; 3 — Karelia [406, figs. 73-76]; 4 — North Ossetia [646b, pl. 55]; 5 — Russia [177, p. 51].



Fig. 366. Triad of two spirals and triangle: 1, 2 — Phoenician capitals in Spain [793, p. 59] and Palestine [785, p. 143]; 3 — wooden capital in vernacular Ossetian architecture; 4 — vessel of ca 2000 BC, Ukraine [648, p. 152].



Fig. 367. Triad of two spirals and plant symbol: 1 — Crete, 1500 BC [676c, p. 477]; 2 — Delos, ca 600 BC; 3 — Athens, ca 600 BC; 4 — Abkhazia [9, pl. 53]; 5 — Daghestan, Maza [562, p. 93].

years ago (Fig. 364: 229; see also Fig. 18: 4); in this case the two rosettes without the middle element could simply be a doubled symbol of the goddess.

The triangle being a female symbol, some versions of the sacred triad have this figure in the middle. Bolster capitals in traditional Daghestanian architecture are often adorned with round and triangular projections (Fig. 365: 1). The same motif was known in Georgia, Ossetia, and Russia (Fig. 365: 2-5). The triad of two disks and a triangle between them was used by the Celts as an emblem of the goddess [814, Tables 7, 8].

The two disks as lateral elements of the triad first appeared before the Bronze Age. The composition of two rings and an angle (chevron) between them is encountered on pottery of the Caucasian Aeneolithic [389, p. 59]. The chevron is a symbol of the Great Goddess, and its position in the middle of the triad is clear. However, disks and rings were also among her symbols during the Aeneolithic and Neolithic. Their position as flanking elements in the triad may be perceived as an allegorical designation of the Twins, the goddess' children. We can see her symbol on figures of twins (Fig. 279: 5), on figures of animals that appear as lateral elements in the triad and are therefore also twins, the goddess' children (Fig. 354: 1). The goddess' symbols, well as figures of birds, could probably have designated the Twins, although the Twins were not considered birds like their mother.

When the lateral elements in the triad are spirals, it is difficult to judge their original meaning: the spiral could have originated from concentric circles (Fig. 365: 4) and might also have designated the snake, since the serpent was the Twins' father. Triads with spirals as flanking elements are quite common. In this case, as in the previous one, the middle element may also be represented by the triangle or chevron (Fig. 366). This emblem spread from the Near East to Western Europe and into Central Asia.

If, on the other hand, a schematic plant design appeared in combination with spirals, the sacred triad was composed



Fig. 368. Triad of two connected spirals and goddess symbol: 1 — North Africa, Roman period [813, pl. 84]; 2, 3 — Hungary, Roman period [719, p. 411]; 4 — Daghestan, design on walls of structures in Kwanada, 15th c. [353, p. 145] and Itsari, 12th c.; 5 — Iran, 700 BC [101a, p. 295]; 6 — Northern Africa, Roman period [813, pl. 84].

²²⁹A necklace with horseshoe shaped pendants, Neolithic symbols of the rain cloud, rests on the bosom of this woman from ancient Iberia. Breast plates of such shape are still worn in Daghestan.

of two symmetrical spirals and a plant sign between them (Fig. 367). Such a composition resembles a Neolithic bispiral symbol (Fig. 85) in which the central element emerged as a result of confusion with the tripartite emblem (Fig. 367: 1). The mutual influence of these two similar emblems could have taken an opposite course: the two spirals of the sacred triad resemble a Neolithic bispiral symbol, the ram sign, as a result of which the latter turned into the three-element composition, forming yet another series of its variants (Fig. 368: 2-6). Hence the shape of the Ionic capital.

The so-called Aeolian capital is a variant of the composition consisting of two spirals and a plant symbol (Fig. 367: 2). Architectural historians since the nineteenth century have held that this was the prototype of the Ionic capital. However, both the Aeolian and Ionic capitals fall into the category of the sacred triad. We have already discussed the mistaken opinion that the Ionic capital derived from the bolster with a "decorative motif" of two volutes, and we pointed out that the bivolute symbol could occur on a pillar with no bolster or even on a separate pillar

not used as a support (Fig. 78: 4, 5). To this may be added another example of a similar emblem (three-element in this case) placed on top of a pillar across a beam (Fig. 366: 3).

Figure 369 shows examples of a combination of the sacred triad with the emblem of the Great Goddess (two rosettes and a plant sign between them), and a symbolic ram sign (a lyre-shaped line). As the ram sign symbolized terrestrial vegetation, its combination with the goddess' emblem belongs semantically in the category of the designs shown in Figure 88.

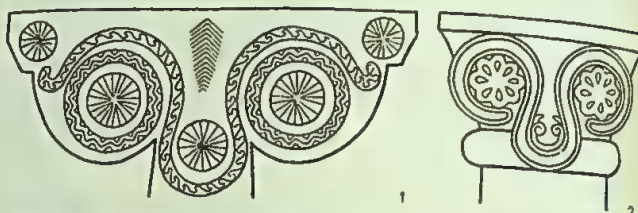


Fig. 369. Combination of goddess emblem and ram horns symbol: 1 — wooden capital in a house, Daghestan, Machada [140, fig. 4]; 2 — stone capital, Southern Georgia, 8th c. [21, pl. 44].

THE GREAT GODDESS

Numerous female images fashioned during the Paleolithic, more specifically, during the Aurignacian-Solutrean period, i.e., about 35 to 15 millennia B.C., have been unearthed on the territory stretching from the Pyrenees to Lake Baikal. In the majority of cases these are small figurines made of stone, ivory, and deer antler; bas reliefs and contour drawings carved in stone are also encountered. There is no scholarly consensus as to the purpose of these works of primeval art or whom they represent.²³⁰ P. Efimenko maintained that a woman progenitor was venerated in the Paleolithic [171]; S. Zamyatnin was of the opinion that the Paleolithic female images reflected a belief in their ability to favor the hunt [182]; A. Abramova expressed an opinion that primitive people were aware of both these notions, that they were interrelated [6]; F. Hančar believed these female images represented a mythical patroness of home hearth [709]; the same view was voiced by S. Tokarev [519]. According to A. Stolar, the female image in Paleolithic art was polysemantic [506]. V. Zybkovets [188, pp. 214-215] maintains explicitly that the Paleolithic female statuettes do not testify to cult pre-conceptions, but merely reflect the society's respect for women.²³¹

²³⁰ A survey of various opinions on the subject is included in Z. Abramova's book on Paleolithic human representations [6, pp. 61-70].

²³¹ His book published by the government owned Political Literature Publishing House expresses an orthodox Marxist view according to which primitive society had no religion. Zybkovets maintains that primitive people were conscientious and well-behaved members of society (for that was the epoch of "primitive communism"), that man's thinking was logical, that primitive art played a "practical-cognizant" role, that initiation rites were built around "a practical, positive, rational core," that the custom of inhumation emerged as a result of "caring for relatives" and "an instinct for tidiness and cleanliness," etc.

Various authors advocate the view that Paleolithic female images represented ancestor mothers, predecessors, symbolizing unity and blood relationships between members of the community, that they served as fetishes of the idea of reproduction, were a visual embodiment of the idea of childbirth, and expressed the primitive human association's concern for increasing its numbers [171, pp. 382, 403; 401, p. 76; 760, p. 112]. This seemingly plausible assumption, however, is no more than speculation, although it is sometimes stated as established truth. There is no evidence to support it. On the contrary, there are facts that cast doubt on it. During the Magdalenian period, about the 25 to 10 millennia B.C., by no means marked by a decline in the material culture or the arts, the female images nearly disappeared. This cannot be explained in terms of the above assumption. S. Tokarev disputes the hypothesis, rightly remarking that ethnographic studies have revealed no cult of female ancestors among primitive tribes, including such as preserved the maternal tribal system [519, p. 13].

Moreover, if one does not conjecture from subjective conceptions, but examines the facts, it turns out that tribes who lived by hunting and gathering, as well as those practising primitive agriculture, would not be particularly interested in an increase in their community and thus in a higher birth rate [650, pp. 43, 51]. By the way, this exemplifies the fact that the apparent is not always the truth and that the first idea to come to mind is not always right.

Yet another hypothesis also appears attractive. Images of hunted animals in Paleolithic art are sometimes accompanied by female signs. These signs are even more common than the darts and wounds accompanying Paleolithic animal representations in France and Spain. This suggests that Paleolithic female images expressed a belief in

women's magic power to influence the outcome of the hunt [182, p. 54; 345, p. 98]. Indeed, many primitive peoples in different parts of the world — Africa, America, Siberia — had rituals imitating the killing of animals to ensure a successful chase; women took part in them, their role being special, magical [205, pp. 94-98]. This explanation, however, raises questions. Firstly, what was behind the belief that women could exercise a magic influence over men's hunting? Secondly, since women supposedly had magic powers and performed rites to realize these potentials, why make figurines when there were live women at hand? Excavations of a Paleolithic settlement in Siberia reveal that the female statuettes were confined to the women's part of the dwelling [112, p. 40]. Consequently, they must have played a part in the women's daily life. It would have been most unusual for women to practise witchcraft using their own images.²³² Perhaps, the role both of women and of female statuettes was secondary, depending on a mythical female creature.

Such an assumption is supported by the nature of some Paleolithic designs. For example, the female figure sometimes has a tail [171, p. 390]. A drawing of a pregnant woman covered by a bull [703, Table 85] speaks for itself. Here some of the woman's members are animal-like rather than human, for instance, paws instead of hands and feet. Is this the mythical mother of animals? Let us recall myths of the "mother of beasts" influencing the outcome of a hunt [760, p. 36], and myths from Classical Antiquity featuring a goddess as the patroness of wild animals and hunting. Possibly these personages originate in the Paleolithic, assuming that the Paleolithic produced the notion of a goddess favoring proliferation of wild animals on the one hand, and ensuring a successful hunt on the other, the goddess thus incarnating both birth and death.

Some scholars opine that the image of the Neolithic goddess originated as early as the Paleolithic [654, p. 24; 709, p. 147; 763, p. 29]. If we assume that Paleolithic female portrayals represent neither the human mother nor the sorceress ensuring a good hunt, but an almighty supernatural creature, this will help us to understand why she was nearly always depicted faceless: people were afraid of her glance. Bull heads found in Neolithic sanctuaries of Asia Minor also have no eyes (Fig. 67: 4); this was probably because the object represented an awesome deity whose glance should be avoided.

The female demon of Slavic fairy tales, Baba-Yaga, "does not see"; a contemporary children's game in Russia features a "blind baba" (woman). In Greek mythology, Lamia was a female monster who devoured children; she was considered harmless if she had no eyes, which may be a survival of Paleolithic conceptions expressed through faceless female statuettes. In the Near East, during Classical Antiquity, the goddess was not infrequently pictured with her eyes covered with a strip of cloth. In Greek mythology, the Gorgons were female monsters whose glance turned the beholder to stone. In a North American Indian myth

²³² The following ethnographic parallel is of interest. A dummy with emphasized female characteristics was made by Adygeian women recently as the twentieth century, using it in their specifically feminine religious rites [611, p. 124].

a certain creature had eyes covered, and if the cover strip was removed, the person whose sight the creature's eye caught died on the spot [371a, p. 306]. In another American Indian myth, a woman reduced her husband to ashes by her glance. This striking similarity between the myths cannot be accounted for unless they had a common origin. The popular belief that the glance of a supernatural creature could kill was global. Consequently, it would have had to appear very long ago to spread all over the world by oral transmission. It seems that the superstitions about the "evil eye" and jinxing which have survived well into the twentieth century, are at least twenty-five thousand years old.

Ancient Near Eastern goddesses were often represented as veiled female figures. Women covered their faces in rituals associated with the Great Goddess. For example, the face of a bride was covered with a veil or her headdress had a fringe (an analogue of rain) hiding her forehead and eyes. In Russia, the bride covered her face with a semi-transparent veil, and so did married women outside the home. In Sardinia, it is still customary for women to cover their faces with kerchiefs at funerals, while widows wear veils as a sign of mourning to the end of their life. According to an Adygeian rite, an especially assigned girl brought new fire to her village, wearing a yashmak (a veil). There is evidence that women in the Ancient Near East covered their faces in everyday life, as well as during religious rituals. The biblical story relates that when Rebekah first saw her bridegroom Isaac, she put a veil over herself. There can be no doubt that the veiling of the face among Muslim women is rooted in these ancient customs.

A Hebrew word for "veil for the eyes" is *ra'alah*; the word *ra'al* ('poison, venom') comes from the same root. These words must be associated with ancient terms, now forgotten, used for the earth god in the image of the serpent and for his spouse with a covered face. They are also related to *ra'* ('evil'), *ra'ah* ('friend'), *ro'eh* ('shepherd' and 'rooster'), i.e., to notions associated with the image of the Black God.

In the Northern Caucasus a stone female sculpture dating from the sixth or fifth centuries B.C. has no mouth [33k, p. 111]. In many prehistoric and ancient designs of mythical creatures, the mouth is lacking [292, p. 407]. Apparently people avoided depicting the mouth of a creature which, they believed, devoured human beings. Australian aborigines, too, portrayed their goddess mouthless (Fig. 390: 10).

Paleolithic female figurines are often headless; if they have a head, it is devoid of a face; if there is a face, it is mouthless. When the Upper Paleolithic culture was at its height, the female statuettes disappeared: people became afraid not only of the eyes or the mouth, but of the very image of the ferocious goddess. This does not mean, however, that she was no longer worshiped. As demonstrated by Z. Abramova, not all female images fell into disuse during the Magdalenian period; only their naturalistic representations faded out and were replaced by conventional interpretations, by schematizations which often rendered the image unrecognizable [4, p. 103]. Several of the thousands of years later, during the Neolithic, images of the goddess reappeared, but in some parts of Eurasia they remained taboo. For example, in the Altai, where idols were

common, the "mistress of the mountain" was never made [433, p. 159]²³³; judging by verbal descriptions, she was imagined nude with big breasts, just as she was represented fifteen to thirty thousand years ago. The Romans made abundant statues of their gods, but avoided producing a statue of Vesta.

Other facts also support the assumption that the warning not to make images of deities endured thousands of years. Could this have been the source of the ban on graven images of the Deity in Judaism and Islam? Can iconoclastic attitudes in Byzantium be traced to such roots? The traditional explanation in monotheistic religions is the struggle against idolatry. But imagery is intrinsic to Christianity and Buddhism, and therefore does not contradict monotheism or faith in the spiritual principle of the Deity. On the other hand, idols, i.e., images of gods, were not typical of beliefs that replaced the early farmers' religion from Western Europe to Siberia. Compared to the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, European tribes of the Bronze Age hardly fall into the category of idolaters. Nor did the Romans make images of the divine during the archaic period. The Hittites represented their deity by a stone stela without pictorial images. Judging by the Rig-Veda, Indian Aryans did not worship idols. The ancient Persians did not worship divine images.

Perhaps the fact that Daghestanian art is nonfigurative is due to this ancient aversion towards representing deities. Daghestanian architecture and decorative art bespeak a high level of artistic culture, yet anthropomorphic images are rare or quite primitive. There was no ban on representing human beings among Caucasian mountain dwellers in pre-Islamic times, yet such representations were not produced.

Was it only the awe-inspired unwillingness to make images of the deity that was responsible for nonfigurative ancient art? Perhaps certain psychological traits are also involved. It will be pointed out in the chapter "Ornamental Style" that both early-farming Neolithic and traditional Daghestanian ornaments are characterized by free composition, an artistic quality undoubtedly connected with ethnic individuality in the psychology of the artists who made those ornaments. In analyzing the nonfigurativeness of a particular stratum of archaic art, it is necessary to note yet another quality, which may be described as non-literality. We have remarked that Neolithic art employed a method of narration, rather than demonstration. This was due to certain intellectual-psychological traits, such as an aptitude to perceive the world through one's "inner vision," which competes with concrete visual perception. Let us turn to classical Greco-Roman art by way of comparison. It is fascinating in its strikingly skillful, not infrequently virtuoso, photographism. This art was created by people whose perception of the world was clear, objective, and analytical. However, this is not the only possible attitude to reality in art. Advocates of dogmatic "realism" believe that art must "reflect" reality. Some writers restrict the functions and methods of art even further; for example, the nineteenth century author N. Chernyshevsky, considered an authority in Marxist aesthetics, believed that art was

²³³ As already noted, the image of the Great Goddess was sometimes associated with mountains.

meant for "showing" the world in the literal sense of the word. However, art has other functions. Its mission is to express man's attitude to the world. Proceeding from this, it may resort to devices other than portrayals of nature which match visual perception. Neolithic people did not use this device to express their attitude to the world. Their art was probably associated with this feature of ethnic psychology, an inclination to a non-literal perception of reality. The characteristic of ethnic psychology, which expresses itself in that concrete visual perception of reality does not occupy a major place in the entire complex of man's spiritual connection with his environment, is also reflected in language. For example, Latin, ancient Greek, Russian, and German, and their respective poetry, reflect an essentially visual perception of the world. Read Homer once more. This is a precise inventory of the world as seen by the poet. Now read the Torah. There is almost no description in it, with the exception of the instructions on the building of the sanctuary.²³⁴ This, too, is the quality of the Hebrew language. It provides a somewhat indefinite idea of what is visually perceived, for which end its means are scanty. But it possesses a highly developed potential for determining notions and the relationships between them, a capacity for expressing feelings, morality and other spiritual categories.

But let us go back to the image of the goddess. During the Mesolithic, natural climatic and social conditions, the way of life, culture, and customs changed from what they were during the Paleolithic. Mesolithic representational art has reached us through only a very small number of monuments, and we possess very little evidence for analyzing the beliefs then current.

Following the disappearance of female figurine idols at the end of the Paleolithic, they reappear at the beginning of the Neolithic, in about the eighth millennium B.C., although in a different region: Southeastern Europe and Western Asia, where agriculture was developing. Does this mean that the early farmers' female statuettes reflected religious conceptions not related by descent to Paleolithic ones? The gap between the Paleolithic and Neolithic is several thousands of years long. During the Mesolithic, characterized by instability in the population, ethnic communities changed and new ones emerged. Besides, the Paleolithic monuments bearing witness to an advanced spiritual culture, and the monuments of the early farming Neolithic period, are confined to different, if adjacent, territories: the former to the zone of Eurasia, from the Pyrenees to Lake Baikal and Hindustan, the latter to Western Asia and Southern Europe. European Neolithic culture appears to be secondary to the Western Asian; it is not a direct continuation of the European Paleolithic. Thus, due to the appreciable chronological gap and a certain regional discontinuity, it seems doubtful that there was a continuity of spiritual life between the Paleolithic and the early farming Neolithic. Nevertheless, certain facts testify that there was such a continuity. The chronological

²³⁴ Even where words create a visual picture, they may have a different purpose. For example, if it is said that Abraham's camels were muzzled, the aim is not to describe how the camels looked, for the statement is accompanied by the comment: lest they graze in someone else's pastures.

gap falls in the Mesolithic, which left inadequate material reflections of spiritual culture, but which must have had an oral tradition. The absence of a Paleolithic forerunner in the Western Asian Neolithic should not puzzle anyone, for a thousand kilometers is not such a great distance for several thousand years to cover.

It may be suggested that there was no gap at all, because although the Paleolithic and the Neolithic were separated by the Mesolithic in Northern Eurasia, the beginning of the Neolithic in Western Asia dates back to the 12th or 11th millennia B.C., i.e., to as long as the Paleolithic still existed in Europe. In the course of excavations of the early farmer culture in Jericho a sculptured head from the twelfth millennium B.C. was unearthed, one half of which shows the face of a bearded man and the other the muzzle of a beast. There is little doubt that this image of the Great God was connected with a cult tradition reaching to the Paleolithic. In addition to the mythology involved, other evidence links the Paleolithic and early farming cultures [196, p. 37].

The image of the venerated goddess is common the world over. Its features are everywhere the same: she is the mother, and at the same time vicious, cruel, bloodthirsty. It is likely that women in bacchic ecstasy identified themselves with the ferocious goddess when they tore animals to pieces and bit into their convulsed flesh. Survivals of the concept of the Neolithic goddess influenced the image of Gorgon/Medusa, and of certain personages of ancient Egyptian mythology such as the daughter of Ra destroying mankind, and the monster Amamath devouring the souls of sinners. To pacify the goddess she was offered human sacrifice; children were killed in her honor, suicides were committed, self-torture inflicted, people beat one another [802, pp. 28-32].

It is not surprising, in the light of all this, that the scorpion was one of the creatures representing the goddess. Female figures or symbols encircled by scorpions can be seen on Neolithic pottery from Iran (Fig. 221: 7). In Ancient Egypt, the scorpion was a symbol of various female deities: Isis, Hathor, and Serket [641, pp. 377, 378; 766b, pp. 69, 178]. In antiquity and during the Middle Ages, the scorpion symbolized lewdness, since the goddess was considered lascivious. The scorpion was associated with water, so the zigzag was its sign, although it dwells in dry places [730b, p. 1408], because the goddess was the giver of moisture.

Some graphemes depict the goddess as an insect, as in Figure 372: 10, 11. In the second of these designs the hands are pointed hooks. Such a detail also characterizes some female statuettes (Fig. 358: 1). It must have designated the sting of the goddess' scorpion.

The goddess was apparently considered as not just patently malicious, but as simply unable to differentiate between good and evil, unwise, like an animal or a blind element of nature. According to the ancients, one who drank from the spring flowing in the vicinity of the goddess' sanctuary, would lose his reason [834, p. 237]. This was probably why all peoples, including American Indians, regarded the mentally disturbed as "marked by the god." The goddess' rites were accompanied by rollicking, frenzied dancing, hysterical howling. Ritual dances were performed to the beat of drums and clash of timbrels, cymbals, and castanets.

Such a goddess image could not have emerged as a result of deifying maternal ancestors. This deity was a personification of a wicked, capricious mystical power governing human life and destiny. The goddess' consort, even surpassing her in ferocity, was another personification of this power. People saw the evil prevailing in the world, and the gods they imagined were to be evil and ruthless.

Paleolithic and Neolithic female statuettes provide a basis for the assumption that in those days the female deity was supreme in the pantheon. Ancient Cretan art also bears witness to the supreme position of the female deity. Written evidence indicates that the Great Goddess (or the Great Mother, Magna Mater), as she is referred to in ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian texts, was indeed a major deity. It is not quite clear why. Scholars associate veneration of the supreme goddess with the matriarchate, a theoretical stage or state in primitive society in which matriarchs held the chief authority. However, the matriarchate is no more than a hypothesis. Its existence in some peoples' past is only conjecture. There are no reasons for assuming, let alone asserting, that such a social order was universal at a certain stage of human history.

When former deities became negative personages in later myths and traditions, images of impious female as well as male beings emerged. In a Babylonian legend, the god Marduk defeated the female monster Tiamath, an incarnation of evil. In Great Britain, old legends and twentieth century "eye-witnesses" tell of a female monster who lives at the bottom of a deep lake. Such monsters also include the Gorgon/Medusa; in studying her, the archeologist Arthur Frothingham concluded that she was a grotesque image of a deity once venerated [685]. Frothingham noticed that the hypothetical goddess represented both the productive and the destructive forces of nature, but he was mistaken in believing that she personified either earthly fertility or the sun. He believed that Gorgon/Medusa represented the sun because she was occasionally portrayed within a disk (incidentally, such a composition was also known in pre-Columbian America, see Fig. 370: 6). This disk, however, as we now know, symbolized not the sun, but heaven. The basis for supposing that Gorgon/Medusa represented the forces of earth was her portrayals with snakes in the hands and on the head. But snakes were attributes of her male partner, the earth god. That was why snakes were depicted on the belly, head, and legs, and in the hands of some female statuettes. American Indians, by way of some "similar conditions" or perhaps as a result of incredible coincidence, had the same story: the supreme goddess of the Mayas was pictured as a woman with the paws of a the beast and a snake on her head [371a, p. 520]; the ancient Mexican goddess Chuacoatl, portrayed holding an infant, was regarded as the "serpent's wife" [656, p. 29].

If the goddess' husband was a serpent, it would be logical to expect that she too would look like a reptile. Yet, with rare exceptions occurring mainly where only a distant echo of the early farmers' religion had reached, such as the Far East and pre-Columbian America, the goddess was not imagined as a snake. The mythological mentality does not rule out sexual relationships between different species. Representations of Gorgon/Medusa have a feature which points, if not to her reptilian nature, at least to her

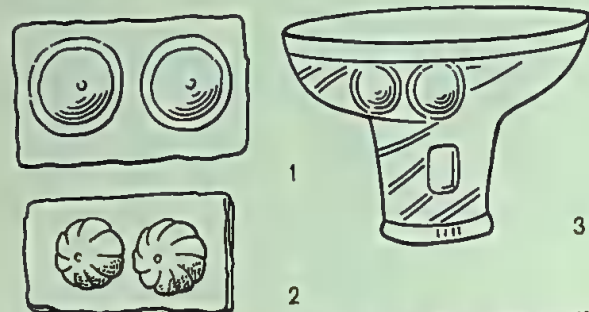


Fig. 373. Mammary symbol: 1, 2 — Daghestan, 19th c. [181, p. 163]; 3 — Tripolye culture (Ukraine), ca 3000 BC [414, p. 64].

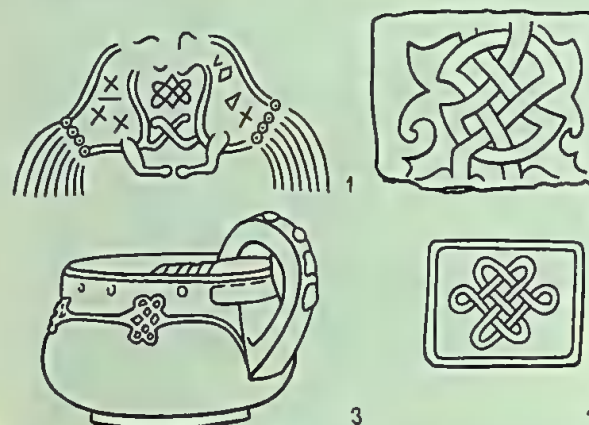


Fig. 374. Umbilical cord symbol: 1 — fragment of a carved door, Daghestan, Kalakoreish [156, pl. 16]; 2 — carved stone, Daghestan, Kubachi; 3 — wooden bowl, Daghestan, Gochob [376, p. 375]; 4 — Altaian ornamental pattern.

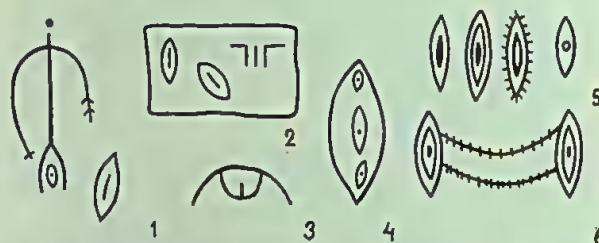


Fig. 375. Sign of female sex: 1 — rock wall designs near Kapchugai, Daghestan [322, p. 110]; 2 — signs on masonry of Derbent fortress, Daghestan [49, p. 39]; 3 — sign on the breast of mother-goddess, Russia, Middle Ages [475, p. 465]; 4 — stone engraving, Checheno-Ingushetia [90]; 5, 6 — elements of Tripolye-Cucuteni ornament [75, p. 71].



Fig. 376. Goddess' pelvis: 1 — Tripolye-Cucuteni [696, p. 167]; 2 — Baltic region, 19th c. [268, p. 110]; 3 — Celtic, ca 100 BC [733, p. 155]; 4 — widespread ancient grapheme.

as well as its pictorial representations suggests that we have here a significant cult idea. That the posture was attributed to the Great Goddess is indicated by more detailed pictures (Fig. 372: 2). Representations of the goddess in this posture were schematized as early as the Neolithic (Fig. 372: 1); they portray her as giving birth [762, p. 125]. Figurative representations of the goddess in labor have also been found in Asia Minor and Southeastern Europe [696, p. 166].

The schematized representation of the goddess in labor (Fig. 372: 7) became confused with a diagram of paired semicircles or brackets (Fig. 54) and with the sign of the Twins (Fig. 285: 4). This resulted in a symbol common throughout Europe and Western Asia (Fig. 372: 8, 9). Representations of a squatting figure found in rock wall paintings of Spain (Fig. 372: 2, 3) are considered Mesolithic. One of these figures has a rain sign, typical of the Neolithic, instead of the head (Fig. 372: 3, cf. Fig. 10: 6). It appears that the heaven symbol of an arch with "cilia" emerged, like images of the goddess in labor, in pre-Neolithic times (see also Fig. 10: 3). The sign of an arch with radial strokes is not the only evidence of pre-Neolithic symbolism expressing idolization of the sky and the rain cloud, later typical of the Neolithic. For example, before agriculture developed, a grapheme with this meaning already existed, looking like an oval with strokes along the perimeter (Fig. 260: 1). Ovals with such strokes also occur on older materials, such as Paleolithic "handprints."

In some localities of Daghestan, stones shaped like a female breast or a pair of breasts (Fig. 373: 1, 2) can be seen embedded in masonry of buildings. Female breast representations are encountered on Neolithic pottery (Fig. 373: 3); they are also known in Africa [275, p. 12]. This is yet another symbol of the Great Goddess: many Neolithic statuettes portray a woman with hands touching her breasts. This gesture, still an element in the dances of some African peoples, must have been significant in the cult of the goddess. It is possible that the custom of folding the hands of a deceased on his chest reflects a desire to make the limbs imitate the characteristic gesture of the goddess (it was believed that when a person died he retired to the other world where he was supposed to face the deity).

A specific loop-like diagram is encountered in Daghestan (Fig. 374: 1-3). This pattern is known, in particular, to inhabitants of the Altai: it was embroidered on women's belt pendants with little bags containing their children's umbilical cords (Fig. 374: 4). This plait design may represent the umbilical cord, and may also be associated with the cult of the mother goddess; indeed, it can replace the goddess in the three-figure emblem (Fig. 374: 1; 346: 1).

Lenticular diagrams, obviously signs of the female sex (Fig. 375: 1, 2, 4), are found in Daghestan and Checheno-Ingushetia. M. Gimbutas adduces Neolithic examples of this motif [696, p. 104], showing that they were associated with the cult of the goddess as a personification of fertility. Representations of the female generative organ in combination with an arch, a cloud sign and an emblem of the heaven goddess (Fig. 375: 3), show that designs of this type were not simply designations of the female sex, but rather symbols of the Great Goddess. Some

compositions with a lenticular sign indicate that it, too, represented not just a woman, but the goddess herself. The sign may, for example, be twofold or threefold (Fig. 375: 4, 6), corresponding to other double and triple symbols of the Great Goddess.

Female thighs (Fig. 376: 1) must also have been a goddess symbol. A transitional form (Fig. 376: 2) confirms this assumption as to the origin of the ancient grapheme presently believed to be an image of the heart (Fig. 376: 4).²³⁶ In Figure 376: 3, three connected dots are placed within a heart shape, "trinity" being a distinctive characteristic of the Great Goddess. As we can see, the contemporary graphic symbol of love, a heart pierced by an arrow, is of quite ancient origin: the heart shape designated female thighs, while the arrow was the phallus. Thus, the "heart pierced by an arrow" initially symbolized sensual ties between the god and the goddess, but not the spiritual love.

Pictures representing copulation are sometimes encountered among rock wall paintings, for instance in Daghestan [328, p. 149] and Sweden [628, p. 169]. They most likely not only illustrate the relationship between the god and the goddess, but have a broader meaning. A notion once existed that human sexual intercourse promoted an increase in livestock and ensured rich crops. Such beliefs and the corresponding rites have been recorded by ethnographers in different parts of the world, including the Caucasus [582, pp. 116, 117].

Ancient cults comprised rituals for ensuring fertility, in conformity with the simple, direct, and unsophisticated perception of ancient man. Conception is preceded by copulation, and this process was reflected in cult practices. It seems that one such action consisted in women riding swings, which must have imitated the sexual act. A model of a swing with a woman on it was unearthed during excavations in Crete. The ancients did not make toys for fun; this article must have been a cult object. Special significance was attached to swinging girls in Ancient Greece, Rome, and in popular rites of recent Europe. The young man, the fiancé, was supposed to swing the girl [829b, pp. 146-150]. It was indecent for girl and man to swing together [228b, p. 331]. An ancient Greek picture shows a satyr swinging a woman [786, Table 37]. In contemporary Greece, swings are placed near the house of newlyweds, and swing songs have erotic connotations.

Some authors believe that swinging rituals symbolized the cyclic movement of the sun [693, p. 12; 829b, p. 44]. This assumption is not reinforced by plausible argumentation. Yet if such an understanding of the ritual existed, it must have been a reinterpretation of an earlier custom with a different meaning.

Survivals of the Great Goddess cult were retained in Asia Minor and partly in Greece and other places during the period of Classical Antiquity. They involved worship of the phallus and rites marked by bacchanalia and orgies. Temple prostitution, believed pleasing to the goddess, existed in the ancient world. When the cult of the goddess included lechery and the goddess herself was pictured in sexual contact with the male deity, the opinion that she was a virgin appears paradoxical.

²³⁶This sign was known not only to ancient inhabitants of Europe and Western Asia, but also to American Indians [740, Table 12].

The Greek Athene and Artemis were considered virgins, as was the Semitic Anath, with the Neolithic goddess as their prototype. So also were the Mycenaean Ma-Zivia, mother of the world, and the Ingushian fertility goddess Tusholi; all of these were referred to the Great Mother to whom supplications for children were addressed. Numerous data trace back Christ's mother Mary to the Neolithic goddess; her virginity was a matter of tradition.²³⁷ In many cases attendants in the goddess' temples were required to be virgins. Primitive cultures commonly believed that virgins were endowed with special religious powers, so that, for instance, sacred dancing in some tribes was performed by maidens, and not mature women [819, p. 140].

The notion of the virgin birth was common in ancient mythology. Nana was impregnated by Attis, Hera by Hephaestus, Isis by Hor, all without sexual intercourse. Also typical of some myths is the motif of unrealized copulation. For example, according to the Romans, Priapus did not succeed in violating Vesta; Martha managed to avoid the solicitations of Minos who wanted to possess her [787, p. 439].

The Sanskrit *dēvi* ('goddess') and Slavic *dēva* ('virgin') seem to be etymologically related (some linguists admit this relationship, others rule it out).

The assumption that there were different goddesses in the Neolithic religion, one who gave birth while a virgin and another who produced an infant through intercourse with a male deity, does not agree with available evidence, which points to one mother goddess only. Yet, there could have been two such goddesses deriving from different generations of gods in obsolete religious conceptions. Possibly, different tribes held different opinions regarding this aspect of the goddess. The idea of virginal conception may have originated from the notion that the world, including the gods, was created by a single primordial being; if it was single, no sexual act could have preceded birth. Thus, a primordial female deity alone produced the father and the mother of the world in a Sumerian myth and in the Rig-Veda [778b, p. 497]; in an Egyptian myth, a primordial god impregnated himself by swallowing his own sperm [347, p. 24].

Primitive tribes throughout the world believed that a holy spirit entered a person in dance. Historically, dancing has various origins, psychophysiological and cultic. The dance became a religious rite in the process of ancient cultural development. Noteworthy is a report of a custom according to which old men armed with bows stood near the dancers, threatening to kill anyone making a mistake. An old Indian notion declares that dancing not preceded by prayer is vulgar [819, pp. 88, 219, 223]. Early Christianity did not condemn dancing out of ascetic considerations (not all dances expressed merriment; some were ritual, including those performed at funerals); they were condemned as being an element of pagan rites. Some data indicate that ritual dancing was particularly characteristic of the Neolithic religion, especially when associated with the cult of the Great Goddess. The boisterous (according

²³⁷The belief that an earthly woman can conceive from the Holy Spirit was inherited from the old mythological motif of a woman's liaison with a deity, for example, with Zeus, the flying serpent, and so on; it was also expressed in the sacrifice of virgins to a deity.

to Homer) Artemis was considered ■ inveterate dancer. A Greek saying goes: "There is no place where Artemis would not dance!" [787, p. 433]. The ancient Cretan goddess was frequently pictured dancing or accompanied by dancers. Cybele's cult involved wild dancing. According to Chechenian beliefs, dancing is a favorite pastime of the female forest spirits responsible for the success or failure of the hunt [135, pp. 115, 116].

The Neolithic goddess was not only an ecstatic dancer. Her temperament was generally violent, and, in particular, she was a warrior.

In France and the Ukraine, there are grave stelae from the third millennium B.C., portraying a woman, sometimes armed. There are no male stelae among these monuments. The example shown in Figure 370: 3 was mistakenly published as a male image [136, p. 222]. Certain elements of this figure, such as the female sex sign in the lower portion of the belly (placed upside down, as was not infrequently the case, cf. Fig. 146: 4-6), the breasts (designated by dots, cf. Fig. 371: 2), the hands pressed to the chest, which is typical of Neolithic statuettes, indicate that the representation is that of a woman.

Other examples of an armed goddess are encountered in ancient monuments. Athene comes to mind; but she is not the only one. Aphrodite was considered a goddess of war, as well as of love, like Ishtar-Ashtarte-Anath, and Hurrian Shaushka, whose name has been etymologically linked to *šauri* ('weapon').²³⁸ The Celts also had a war goddess; hence the symbol of Great Britain, an armed woman. The Egyptian heaven goddess Nut was portrayed holding a bow and arrows. The mother goddess in Dravidian India, the Chinese queen of heaven, the Japanese sun goddess, and the mother goddess in the mythologies of pre-Columbian Central America were considered warriors [371b, p. 440]. The Neolithic Great Goddess, from whom all these later mythical personages descend, was thought to be a fighter possibly because her Paleolithic predecessor was a patroness of hunting, i.e., of warfare,²³⁹ and probably also because she was famed as a ferocious lady.

The goddess personified death as well as birth. An ancient Roman author makes her say: "I am nature, the mother of all beings, the ruler of all elements, the beginning of all beginnings, the supreme deity, the queen of shadows" [150, p. 46]. The image of death as a female being harks back to her. Even if in the Neolithic there were no such dicta as "God giveth, and God taketh" and "The Lord's ways are inscrutable," corresponding notions must have existed that far back. They characterize the mistress of the universe, as attested by cross-correlations of ancient myths, rituals, and symbols.

The fifth day of the week was dedicated to the goddess in Ancient Mesopotamia, Europe, Western Asia, and

²³⁸ This etymology must be erroneous. *Šwš* is the root of certain Hebrew words associated with the wedding ceremony and having floral connotations. It is undoubtedly a phonetic variant of the same root to which the word *sus* pertains. Incidentally, the Elami town of *Susa* was referred to as *Sus* or *Šwš*. The name *Sauška* would then be a feminized form of the corresponding name of the Black God, with the suffix *-k*.

²³⁹ Warfare and hunting were seen ■ of similar nature in many archaic cultures [669, p. 36].

the Caucasus. The Teutons made it the day of Freya (hence the contemporary name for Friday in Germanic languages). Russians and Georgians associated Friday with St. Paraskeva, the Ossets with the Virgin Mary. Catholics refer to Friday as the "day of fish" (fish was a symbol of the goddess — see Fig. 355: 1), and as "Venus' day" [723, p. 1].

Friday was known as an unlucky day in medieval Western Europe, as they say, because Jesus was crucified on that day. But also in pre-Christian times executions were generally timed for Fridays [730a, p. 611], which can be interpreted as sacrificial offerings to the goddess.

Many peoples preferred to stay away from work on Fridays, in order not to incur the goddess' anger; the custom was accounted for in Russia in this way. In pagan Russia, Friday was a general holiday; women observed it as recently as the nineteenth century. Slavic traditions featuring Paraskeva-Friday preserved memories of the Neolithic goddess: prayers for rain were addressed to Friday, she was considered a patroness of childbirth and at the same time mistress of the deceased [309, p. 72]. Since the goddess was malevolent, Russians believed that it was unwise to laugh on Friday, lest one should weep much when old age came [310, p. 223]. The goddess' conduct was unreasonable, her moods and actions swung about arbitrarily. In Russian they still say about a capricious woman: "She has seven Fridays a week," meaning she often changes her mind.

The art of spinning and weaving was an acquisition of the Neolithic. Since yarn and fabric were made by women, the crafts were associated with the goddess. In Russia, Paraskeva-Friday was a patroness of spinning. The Tajik *Devi Safed* ("white goddess") was a patroness of spinners; they honored her by staying away from work on Fridays [371a, p. 417]. According to Greek tradition, Athene taught people the art of spinning. Some traditions still preserve evidence that the spider was associated with the goddess, apparently because it is a spinner. Some myths say the world was "spun into being" [802, p. 172]. In Macedonia shuttle-shaped pastry was baked for the New Year feast; it was believed to affect childbirth favorably [212, p. 254]. In Georgia, when a disease afflicted the household, women avoided sewing, knitting, and spinning [12, p. 390]. According to an old Russian superstition, he who sees spindles at Christmas will encounter snakes in summer. Spinning and sewing were favorite occupations of *kikimoras* (nightmares, female monsters), born of the liaison between a demonic serpent and cloud maidens [40c, p. 132, 136].

The spinner goddess was offered a piece of cloth as a gift. The tree was one of the goddess' major incarnations. Hence the custom, surviving to this day in the Caucasus, of tying scraps of cloth to branches of a tree considered sacred.

A piece of cloth became an attribute of the goddess, her symbol. In ancient times cult symbols were attached to a pole to make them easier to carry and use as emblems in religious ceremonies. A piece of cloth on a pole was such an emblem. This was how the flag, initially the goddess' emblem, came into being. In Ancient Egypt, the representation of the flag became an hieroglyph for the

notion 'deity' [639, p. 137]. The cult significance of the flag is attested by old customs of Caucasian mountain dwellers. The Chechenian and Ingushian priest, heading a cult procession, carried a flag; a flag was carried by the Ossets in funerals; ■ nineteenth century author wrote that in Ossetia ■ man come to pay his last respects to a deceased person stuck a little flag (a stick with a cloth) in a chink in the wall. The Old Germanic word *flag* is of obscure origin. In addition to the conventional meaning 'flag' it had other interesting connotations: a bird feather, and a derogatory word for "woman." It is quite likely that the word *flag* is etymologically related to Flaga, the name of the wicked fairy of Scandinavian fairy tales.

Quite probably cloth in the original undyed state was associated with the goddess' image. A piece of plain, i.e., white, cloth was dedicated to the deity. White cloth could also relate to the goddess because she was regarded as the mistress of heaven, and heaven radiates light. It cannot be ruled out that white was associated with the Great Goddess because it is the color of milk, and she was regarded as a mother nursing her offspring.

White is the color of snow, an expressive sign of winter. This could have been the reason that winter was associated with the image of the goddess, had the notion emerged in a cold climate. The early farmers' religion developed in a warm climate, the Near East, yet many of its notions go back to Paleolithic cultures of Europe and Siberia. Besides, snow is not unknown in Western Asia. People saw it on mountain tops. This could be why the Great Goddess was sometimes referred to as "the goddess of mountains," although, generally speaking, mountains were rather associated with her consort, the earth god. Moreover, the hexagonal shape of snowflakes could corroborate the notion that snow was a substance associated with the goddess.

In Russian folk dances women, wearing a kerchief on the head, held ■ white kerchief in the hand (not ■ handkerchief, for common people did not use one). Observing a pagan rite, the Ingushes carried a white flag. Their priests put on white clothing; this custom also existed in Ancient Iran [854, p. 154]. Celtic Druids wore white. The Hittites' ritual clothes were white [29, pp. 54, 56]. The priest among the Hebrews performed divine services dressed in white, while the congregation wore white shirts on the Day of Atonement and during Passover. Western Slavs dressed the female effigy called Smert ('death') or Morena (from *mor* also meaning 'death') in white [200, p. 105]. Russian incantations mention ■ White Baba ('woman') [541, p. 142]. A Caucasian epic about a legendary people, the Narts, associates white with the female personages. Even now, brides, identifying with the goddess, the patroness of marriage, wear white, with a wreath (a ring), the goddess' symbol, on the head, and ■ veil suspended from it, symbolizing rain.

It was believed that people died when the goddess wished it, so white was associated with death. White is the color of mourning in the Orient (in Europe it is black, which, like red, represented the underworld god). Death is imagined as a woman in white in some popular traditions. Not only Jews and Muslims, but also Europeans wrapped their dead in white cloth. American Indians also bury their dead in a

white shroud. In the Ukraine, it was customary to drive the deceased to the cemetery in a cart drawn by white oxen [28, p. 136]. It was common in Russia to lower the coffin into the grave on strips of unbleached linen, which were not taken home afterwards, and when there was a death in the family a towel was hung out of the window [40c, pp. 275-277]. It is still customary in Daghestan to mount a flag, usually white, over the grave or in the place of death. In Russia, a woman's coffin is upholstered in white (a man's in red).

The cult significance of white and its association with the goddess can be seen in the fact that white minerals were considered sacred. In highland Daghestan white stones are placed on graves. Chalk, white clay, and other white materials are found in Sarmatian burials. An old custom of strewing the bottom of graves with white lime still exists in Europe.

It has been suggested that because salt is white, it plays a role in the Russian welcoming offering of "bread and salt," and that this explains the presence of rosettes on Russian and Daghestanian saltcellars. Some Jews still observe an old, almost forgotten custom of bringing bread and salt into a new dwelling before moving in. In another Jewish custom, bread must be salted before it is eaten. Leviticus reads: "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." The Jewish Passover ritual includes eating an egg dipped in salted water (the egg and salt symbolized the Great Father and Great Mother, the parents of the deity of growth to whom pagans dedicated the corresponding feast). Some peoples added salt to baptismal water, a custom obviously based on the association between salt and the goddess who patronized childbirth. Salt was ■ substance used in witchcraft and sacrificial offerings. The ancient Hebrews sprinkled the altar with salt. In Ancient Rome, the sacrificial animal was led to the slaughter with its head sprinkled with salt [730b, p. 1391]. To this day some people believe that spilling salt is ■ bad omen (the goddess was considered ruthlessly vicious, and hence spilling salt, her attribute, could evoke her wrath). The similarity of the Hebrew *melakh* ('salt') and Indo-European *m.l.k/h* ('milk') is not ■ chance coincidence, since both salt and milk are attributes of the goddess as spouse of the god named *B.l./M.l.*; therefore the words *melakh* ('salt') and *melakh* ('king') nearly coincide in the Hebrew.

In the reconstructed Nostratic language the word for 'salt' could not be established, because the words for it are different in later languages, and not traceable to a common parent-form; they apparently emerged through mysticization of the substance. The Indo-European names for salt (Russian *sol*, Latin *sāl*, Gothic *salt*, etc.) are consonant with words for the sun (Latin *sol*, Gothic *sauil*, etc.). This similarity is probably due to the fact that the words for salt and for sun derive from identical names for the heaven goddess and sun goddess, who, being the wife and daughter of the underworld god, has names similar to his. The corresponding names will be analyzed in the next chapter; here we will only remark that in some European languages the appellation for ■■■ it has ■■■ non-Indo-European feminine suffix -ī.

The color red was also occasionally associated with the image of the Great Goddess. Some Neolithic female



Fig. 377. Female deity in bird image: 1, 2 — Southeastern Europe, ca 5000 BC [696, p. 112, pl. 1]; 3 — Asia Minor, ca 7000 BC [762, p. 169]; 4 — Egypt, ca 3000 BC [636, p. 43]; 5 — Ancient Crete [782c, pl. 392]; 6 — Ancient Egypt [675, p. 111].

statuettes are colored red. The supreme goddess of the Mayas was imagined red. The Ossetian goddess Alardā was sometimes pictured white, sometimes red. The attribution of the color red to the Great Goddess seems to be due to the same cause that transformed her into a reptile, namely to resemble her spouse, the earth god. There might also be a different reason. Some Neolithic female figurines bear red spots and stripes, which, like solid red, could express a wish for conjunction between the god and the goddess, a relationship expected to ensure fertility.

The Hittite king wore a belt of red and white wool. In Ancient Iran, the king wore a red and white diadem and red garments with a white stripe [272, p. 74]. The combination of red and white goes back to the symbolism of two supreme deities in the early farmer religion. Under the pharaohs, Upper and Lower Egypt were symbolized by red and white or by the cobra and the vulture (the snake represented earth, while the bird, in particular the vulture, represented the heaven goddess).

Neolithic and Bronze Age artifacts abound with representations of birds. Judging by the fact that the bird sometimes occurs within an oval [764, p. 327] or a toothed disk (Fig. 377: 4), it represented the sky. In Daghestan, birds in heraldic bearings were featured with rosettes, the heaven goddess' symbol, on their wings (Figs. 348: 4; 352: 1). People throughout the world, up to Australian aborigines, regarded birds as divine. A. Taylor, a student of ancient cultures, remarked in this connection: "The heaven god resides in the celestial realm, so that no image can be better suited to him and his envoys than a bird" [514, p. 239]. The Greco-Roman heaven god Zeus/Jupiter was symbolized

by a bird [541, p. 129]. The Lithuanians dedicated April to the goddess Milda, and the Romans dedicated May to the goddess Maya; April and May were designated on an ancient Lithuanian calendar by a schematic bird [132, pp. 7, 8].

A medieval representation of a bird with female breasts has been found in Daghestan (Fig. 186: 3). The Neolithic has left numerous representations of a creature half-bird, half-woman. They were common from Europe [786, Table 50] to India [677, p. 148]. M. Gimbutas analyzed such images (Fig. 377: 1, 2), and concluded that they represented the goddess [696, p. 136]. The bird-goddess was apparently the heaven goddess; indeed, the female deity was often characterized as "mistress of heaven" among peoples of the Ancient East. Paleolithic monuments testify that the images of woman and bird were associated even at that period [508, p. 253]. The Paleolithic representation of a bird on a pole (Fig. 378: 2) may be a symbol of the heaven goddess as a bird, the symbol being identical with the disk on a pole (Fig. 40: 7). The Sumerian deity Anzud, or Im-Dugud, who incarnated good and evil principles simultaneously, was pictured as a bird and the median element in the sacred triad [371a, p. 83]; this is also an indication that the Great Goddess was seen as a bird.

Men and women (possibly priests and priestesses) in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean wore a headgear with a tip pointing forward (Figs. 377: 5; 78: 4); a similar headcovering was also common in the Southern Caucasus. In some Western European countries, women wore a headgear with a triangular projection over the forehead until the seventeenth century; this was a rudiment of an older shape with a more pronounced projection imitating a bird's beak. Tall caps with a tip bent forward have been found in medieval Ingushian tombs; this hat is similar to the famous Phrygian cap, both being, among other things, red. In Ingushia such a headgear was worn by married women only. A large round plate (symbol of heaven) is one of its features. All this indicates that the headgear imitated the head of the goddess pictured as a bird. American Indians and also some ancient inhabitants of the Mediterranean region decorated their heads with bird feathers. In Europe, men decorated their hats with feathers until the eighteenth century and women until the middle of the twentieth. The custom of decorating hats with feathers also existed in the East during the Middle Ages.

Myths, fairy tales, and popular beliefs have recorded the image of a bird goddess. The Teutonic Freya had a



Fig. 378. Male images with bird features: 1 — Western Siberia, Bronze Age [221, p. 105]; 2 — France, Paleolithic [703, p. 277]; 3 — Spain, Paleolithic [6, pl. 26].

feathered shirt which when she wore it transformed her into a bird [40c, p. 186]. Heavenly maidens in Indian traditions combined human appearance with bird forms. The Urartu god's attribute was horns, that of the goddess — wings. In Hittite rituals a wing was a common accessory of a priestess [190, p. 264].

Two feathers were attached to tribal banners in pre-dynastic Egypt. Under the pharaohs, two feathers on the heads of various Egyptian deities were a sign of holiness. They were also a sign of homage, held by dignitaries approaching the pharaoh. The two feathers may be interpreted as one of the various double symbols of the heaven goddess.

The German Perchta, the spinner-goddess, was represented with goose feet [40c, p. 188]. Ishtar was portrayed with wings and bird's feet. Early Christians pictured the Virgin Mary winged. The Sumerian heaven goddess Inanna was also winged [736, p. 33]. The Egyptian heaven goddess Nut was imagined with wings (in Figure 377: 6 note a vessel on her head; she is the same mistress of heavenly waters as in Figure 379: 1). The Greek goddesses (Artemis, Nike, Athene, Aphrodite) were not infrequently represented with wings, although the Greeks did not usually picture their gods winged. The second century Greek author Pausanias comments that he does not understand why Artemis should have wings [859, p. 286]; it must be assumed that she was a bird goddess of the country's pre-Greek population. Some of the Tripolye-Scuteni female figurines are winged [63, p. 132]. If the goddess is a nursing mother and at the same time a bird, the obscure expression "pigeon's milk," which has reached us, becomes clear.

The vulture was a hieroglyph of the Egyptian goddesses Mut and Nehebet. The same hieroglyph could mean 'mother.' What do the vulture and mother have in common? One thing: in the Neolithic religion the Great Goddess was the mother of all living beings and at the same time a demon devouring the dead, like the vulture. There are images of vultures tearing people to pieces on the walls of Çatal-Hüyük Neolithic sanctuaries (Fig. 377: 3). Obviously, the vulture became an incarnation of the goddess because it subsists on carrion. Gorgon/Medusa was associated with a bird of prey; this monster of Classical Antiquity is the same as the ancient Great Goddess, the "mistress of heaven." Tales of the Orochi (a Far Eastern ethnic group) deal with a man-eating bird and a fiery man-eating serpent; these images are reminiscences of the Neolithic "rulers of the world" — the heaven goddess and the earth god.

One can suppose that it was from the notion of the Great Goddess as a bloodthirsty being, and taking into account her manifestation as a bird, that the custom arose of leaving bodies of the deceased for birds to eat; this custom, reported by bewildered Greek and Roman authors, existed in some regions of the world up to the twentieth century. Human interments were found in Çatal-Hüyük containing bones from which the flesh had been removed, possibly by birds. Bones without flesh were interred as far back as the Paleolithic. That was probably when the notion arose that the dead should be given to birds so that the goddess would be satiated and not seek new victims.

The demon of death in Ancient Greece was imagined as a half-woman, half-bird [758, p. 239]. In various traditions, the bird, while venerated, was at the same time considered

demonic. There was a popular belief in Rumania about malicious feminine beings in the form of birds [228b, p. 301]. Nav of the Slavs is a sinister female creature with the appearance of a bird.

The cuckoo was one of the birds associated with the goddess. In Greek superstitions it presages death and leads to the world of the dead, while in India and Japan the cuckoo is a symbol of love. The Polish Żiwie, or Ziva of Baltic Slavs, regarded as the "supreme ruler of the universe," could in popular belief take on the image of a cuckoo. During the Russian spring rite of burying a female effigy, the latter was sometimes referred to as a "cuckoo" [440, p. 89]. An old Russian rite named "cuckoo" has been recorded by ethnographers; it was performed in May, and the participants were women. In Russia the cuckoo was depicted on crosses over graves [240, p. 82]. Judaic regulations list the cuckoo among "unclean" birds prohibited for food. In English the word *cuckoo* is used for slightly crackbrained people; this may be accounted for by the belief that the goddess was insane. It is of interest that in the Mayan language the sacred bird is called *kukul* [569, p. 94].

Why was the cuckoo considered a sacred bird? It appears in May, the month dedicated to the goddess, with its curious call that resembles one of the *huh* of the earth god, the goddess' consort, Kum or Ku.²⁴⁰ The goddess herself might also have this name. The Proto-Indo-European word for the cow, **k'u*, can be compared with the Sumerian *ngu* and ancient Egyptian *ng.w* [108, p. 575]; it is thus not accidental that in languages as unrelated as German and Burmese, the word for 'cow' sounds identical, *Kuh*. The cuckoo's disposition, differing from that of other birds, could have been instrumental in its mythicization: like the Great Mother of the world, the cuckoo does not show love for those upon whom she bestows life.

Some features of the mythicized image of the cuckoo indicate that the goddess it represented was related to the underworld god. For example, some of the god's characteristics were attributed to the cuckoo such as the gift of prophesy, wisdom, longevity, and healing power; it was a portent of misfortune and death, and was believed to be associated with wealth. An old Estonian legend tells that the cuckoo makes gold and silver with its call [240, pp. 81-83]. Data from Classical Antiquity and ethnographic evidence present the cuckoo related to the hawk family, and hawks, as will be shown, were associated with the underworld god.

The stork was considered a sacred bird, apparently because it was white. It delivered babies, a function of the goddess. The Hebrew word for 'stork' is *hasidah*, with the same root as *hesed*, an ambivalent word meaning 'piety' and 'abomination.'

The goddess was also represented by the swan, most probably because of its snake-shaped neck and white plumage. The Russian word *lebed* ('swan') is related to the Latin *albēns*, *albus* ('white'). There are Russian legends about swan maidens, and a belief that the bird was once a woman. The swan image was associated with religious concepts which were subsequently rejected, so the attitude

²⁴⁰ See chapter "The Black God."

to it was one of veneration mixed with the opinion that it was impure [521, p. 52]. The Jews consider the swan impure, its flesh unsuitable for food.

The pigeon, apparently initially only the white one, was also associated with the goddess. The Greeks dedicated white pigeons to Aphrodite [240, p. 72]. A Christian tradition pictures the soul of a righteous man as a white dove. The pigeon was considered an incarnation of Ishtar in Mesopotamia, and pigeon figurines accompany goddess images in Crete. An ancient belief that the soul of the dead turns into a dove was based on a notion that the deceased went to the heaven goddess. The deceased could also be taken by the earth god; for this reason, as recorded in African beliefs, the souls of the dead entered mice and pigeons [240, p. 194].

The Russian word *golub* ('pigeon') is etymologically related to the word *goluboi* ('light blue, azure'), the color of the sky; this is an indication that the bird represented the heaven goddess. In the Persian language, the respective notions are also related: *kabud* ('blue') and *kabutar* ('pigeon'). True, another interpretation has been given of the relation between the pigeon and the color of the sky: the word for blue allegedly derives from the appellation for the pigeon "due to the bluish tint of the pigeon's feathers" [543a, p. 432]. These feathers are not light blue, however, not even plain blue, but black-violet with a greenish shade, not to mention that the pigeon is normally mostly gray.²⁴¹

The owl was one of the birds representing the Great Goddess, probably because its big round eyes resembled the double heaven symbol, two disks. The owl was mythicized by different peoples and in different cultures, and the attitude towards it, as towards other creatures associated with the Great Goddess and the Great God, was ambivalent: it was responsible for both good and evil. A scholar trained in a rationalistic interpretation of superstitions remarks in bewilderment: "We certainly do not know what was on the mind of the ancient hunter who painted the owl in the cave seventeen thousand years ago" [395, p. 44].

The birds associated with the heaven goddess included the swallow. In Ancient Greece it was dedicated to Aphrodite. In Egyptian mythology, Isis assumed the appearance of a swallow. As the heaven goddess was a source of death, a belief emerged that a swallow flying into one's house was an omen of death. The image of the swallow, like that of the Great Goddess, is ambivalent: it symbolized both good and evil [371a, p. 39].

Not all birds were connected to the heaven goddess. Some, for instance the eagle, were associated with the underworld god. The bird image of the earth god arose from the notion that he could rise to the sky.

Birds have been venerated by different peoples since very ancient times. The Siberian Paleolithic left a variety of bird cult figurines (Fig. 179: 1, 2). Mythicization of the bird image, which descends from Paleolithic tradition,

²⁴¹ While white, being associated with the heaven goddess, became indispensable in the category of sacred colors, light blue possesses this connotation only occasionally, in any case according to available data. Ancient Jewish priests wore white garments with sky-blue cords. In our time, the tallith, a white shawl traditionally worn over the head or shoulders by Jewish men at prayer, has blue stripes (often replaced by black ones).

existed in Siberia during the Bronze Age (Fig. 378: 1). Sumerian seals sometimes have representations of a bird worshiped by both people and animals [863, Tables 22, 23]. It is not always possible to know with which deity bird veneration was associated in particular cases. For instance, it is not clear to which deity the expression "God's bird," common to many European languages, refers. Various gods in Homer's epic turn into birds. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Ghost in Christianity, it accompanies images of the goddess or her symbols in ancient Cretan art, and it is associated with fire in Indian and Russian legends [40a, pp. 540, 541]. It is hard to link the image of a bird creating the world [250, pp. 183-186], as recorded in the myths of different peoples, to either the Great Goddess or the Great God.

Connected with the cult of the goddess may be a belief existing in Western Europe and Russia, Ancient Egypt and the Caucasus, including Daghestan, that the souls of the dead enter birds. This belief probably goes back to the Paleolithic. A drawing on a cave wall in Western Europe portrays a group of human figures with bird heads, in strange attitudes [703, Table 295]; perhaps these are souls of the dead risen to heaven. Another drawing depicts a man who has died; he has a bird head (Fig. 378: 2). However, also in Western Europe, one encounters a fabulous Paleolithic creature with a male human body and a bird head, which can hardly be interpreted as the soul of one deceased (Fig. 378: 3). As can be seen, Paleolithic half-men, half-birds are often pictured as male beings. Excavations of a Siberian Paleolithic settlement revealed that the bird figurines were confined to the male quarters of the dwelling [112, p. 40]. These facts cannot yet be interpreted.

Flying insects, in addition to birds, were associated with the Great Goddess. It is apparently to this that representations of syncretic figures combining features of human being and insect refer (Fig. 73: 2; 372: 10, 11).

As M. Gimbutas demonstrates, the bee was an incarnation of the goddess during the Neolithic in Southeastern Europe [696, p. 182]. This ancient belief may account for strange expressions surviving until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Ukrainians referred to the bee as "holy" [521, p. 54], Germans called the bee "God's bird" or "Mary's bird" [40c, p. 785]. The Kabardinians considered Friday a patroness of crops and apiculture [582, p. 26]. Cybele's priestesses were called "bees" [190, p. 264]. The bee was an emblem of Aphrodite, and later of Mary. An ancient Baltic deity of bees and honey had the name Bubilas (one of the Great Goddess' Slav names was Baba). The bee is a symbol of heaven in some traditions [730a, p. 193]. It is associated with funerals in the beliefs of some European peoples; the ancients associated the bee with the world of the dead; a swarm of bees was a bad omen; prophetic powers were attributed to the bee [240, pp. 139-148].

Apples dipped in honey are ritually eaten during the Jewish New Year, a custom now interpreted as a wish for a sweet year. Honey is associated with the goddess in the Rig-Veda [802, p. 30]. Classical Greek and Roman authors report using honey in funeral repasts, and offering honey to chthonic deities [241, p. 141]. Russian ritual food at funerals and births included cereals with honey [310, p.

29]. Ukrainian wedding songs compare the bride to honey [437, pp. 210-213], while a Russian fairy tale describes a girl who smears herself with honey and pastes feathers all over herself [439, p. 120]. In India, a bride was smeared with honey. In Morocco, the bridegroom and bride were given honey and nuts to eat, in Central Asia a woman recently confined was given honey. Honey was associated not only with birth but also with death: vessels containing honey have been found in ancient Egyptian burials.

As honey was believed to be associated with the goddess, patroness of marriage and bestower of childbirth, newlyweds were urged to eat much honey for a period following the wedding (this custom is still observed by some peoples); hence the expression "honeymoon." The notion that honey was associated with the goddess who could send misfortune was probably responsible for the opposite popular prejudice against using honey for food.

T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov express the following opinion in terms of a positivistic interpretation of the origin of cult and mythological conceptions: "The constant association of the bee with female deities may attest that apiculture was largely a feminine occupation in the initial and later early stages of bee-keeping" [108, p. 606]. It was women's duty worldwide to care for the crops, yet cereals belong with male deities. Warfare was always an occupation for men; how then did a mythological image of an armed woman emerge? Specific features of the mythicization of the bee and honey indicate that they were associated not merely with "female deities," but rather with a goddess who had certain powers and characteristics, but nothing to do with apiculture.

The bee was associated with the goddess apparently because of its preoccupation with flowers: the latter were semantically connected with the earth deity in early farmers' beliefs (Fig. 200: 1). A role in the mythicization of the bee could also have been played by the circumstance that honeycombs are hexagonal, and centric hexad graphemes were symbols of the goddess (Fig. 321: 2). Finally, honey could have been associated with the goddess because it seemed rather like sap, presumably pictured as the milk of the goddess embodied by the tree. Indeed, words based on the Nostratic **mayla* mean either honey or sweet sap

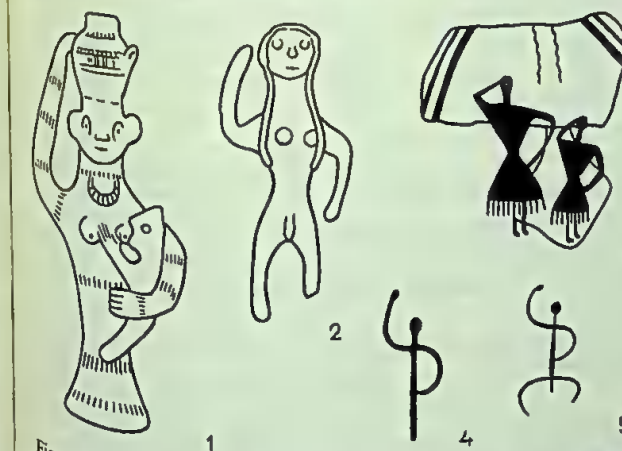


Fig. 379. Gesture of adoration and its origin: 1 — France, ca 1000 BC [744, p. 125]; 2 — Crete, ca 3000 BC [74, p. 185]; 3 — Bessarabia, ca 4000 BC [33c, p. 357]; 4 — U.S.A., Colorado, 12th c. [784b, p. 354]; 5 — Daghestan rock wall picture [256, p. 73].

in different languages [210b, p. 38]. In some cases words for 'milk' are also connected with it. The word **mālgi* has been reconstructed [210b, p. 57] as designating 'milk' in the Nostratic proto-language, but it is probably not by chance that it resembles **mayla*. Some archaic expressions which have reached us reflect a mythological relation between milk and honey. The Edda, for example, reads that the deceased drink milk and honey. The biblical expression "a land flowing with milk and honey" undoubtedly arises from the fact that milk and honey were attributes of the goddess ensuring fertility.

As pointed out, the butterfly was one of the insects that represent the goddess. Hence beliefs that witches could turn into butterflies, that butterflies favored conception and were heralds of war; the Romans called the butterfly *feralis* ('ferocious') [240, pp. 130-138]. It was believed in Europe and as far away as Burma that butterflies were souls of the dead. The Greek Psyche (which means 'soul') was pictured as a maiden with butterfly wings.²⁴²

A small beetle with a round red back and black spots was associated with the goddess. The Slavs call it "God's little cow," the English "ladybird" or "ladybug" (the Virgin Mary's bird or bug), the Lithuanians "diēvo Marjė" (God's Little Mary). Furthermore, this little bug portends rain [371a, pp. 181, 182].

In different parts of Eurasia and America one can find ancient representations of a human figure with the left hand at the waist and the right raised to the head (Fig. 379: 2-5). This was a gesture of adoration, performed, judging by these representations, by both men and women. It suggests the goddess holding an infant in her left arm and supporting a vessel with water poised on her head with her right hand (Fig. 379: 1). This posture was assumed during magic cult incantations to produce rain, as is attested by a picture on a vessel from the fourth millennium B.C. (Fig. 379: 3). Russian and Ukrainian dance stances derive from such ritual dancing, and the contemporary military salute originates from this ancient gesture of adoration.

The figure of a woman holding a vessel represents the "mistress of water." Data listed above showed that the Neolithic goddess was a bestower of rain. Whether or not her image was also associated with terrestrial waters — the rivers and seas — cannot be determined with certainty. The data are contradictory. There is much evidence indicating that the Neolithic god of earth and the underworld personified the nether regions, including seas and rivers. But there is also other evidence.

Rusalkas or vilas (mermaids, nymphs), demonic female creatures with long hair (a characteristic feature of the Neolithic goddess), occupied a prominent position in Slavic popular beliefs; these creatures dwelt in waters and forests, as well as in the fields, though mainly in water. They were as well as in the fields, though mainly in water. They were malevolent and mischievous, and were fond of spinning and of swinging on tree branches (an analogue of swings). The vilas of the southern Slavs could bring good fortune and could also harm people. The eastern Slavs' rusalkas promoted rich crops, but they could also ruin a harvest. Of interest is a thirteenth century representation of a rusalka

²⁴² What economic occupations would account for the fact that the butterfly was associated with female mythological images?

drinking from a horn [430, p. 77]. All these are features of the goddess discussed in this chapter.

Rusalkas were not always associated with water, they could also appear as forest creatures. The Chechenes, for example, have a tale about female forest spirits, women with long hair which they loved to comb; rain and a deadly ring were associated with them [370, p. 162].

The eastern Slav appellation for these creatures, *rusalka*, compares with the word *rusalii*, designating a festival at the end of May, the month of the goddess. The festival included veneration of a sacred tree and weaving rings; ancient Romans, too, twined wreaths on the *rosalia* feast observed in May. According to various beliefs, it was best not to work during the *rusalii* week, so that the nymphs would keep calamities away from the fields. Bracelets women wore when performing *rusalii* rites bore images of birds with women's heads; women with loose hair and long wide sleeves imitating bird wings performed ritual dances. During *rusalii* week the dead were remembered. It follows from all this that the *rusalkas* reflected the goddess' image, and since they were associated with terrestrial waters, this also applied to the goddess.

According to a Chechenian tradition, "the spirit Hi-Nana, mother of waters, dwells in murmuring mountain springs" [135, p. 115]; *hi* is the Chechenian for 'river, water,' and *nana* means 'mother.' The latter word coincides with one of the names for the mother goddess, Nana, widespread in the Ancient East. Some rivers bear names that can be associated with the cult of the goddess, for example, Elbe and Labe (these names derive from the word for white).

As terrestrial waters were sometimes associated with the goddess, fish were associated with a female image. The Nostratic **kala* means not only 'vessel,' but also 'fish' [210a, p. 288]. Archeological materials of the Neolithic epoch include idols that are half-woman, half-fish [696, pp. 109, 110]. The Slavic Mokoš, or Bereguinya, and the Greek Artemis, with characteristics of the Neolithic goddess, were portrayed with fish tails [465, p. 43; 225, p. 301]. In graphic symbolism, the fish personifies the goddess (Fig. 348: 4; 355: 1).

According to other data, however, the fish was also associated with the male deity of the nether regions. This is indicated, for example, by the mythological image of the "snake-fish." Some idols found in the highland Caucasus, which, as pointed out above, represented the male deity

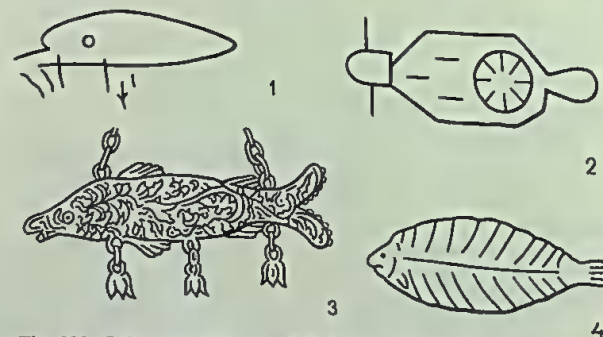


Fig. 380. Cult representations of fish: 1 — rock wall drawing, Daghestan [328, p. 148]; 2 — carved stone, Daghestan, Kirtsik; 3 — Italy, 18th c. amulet [642b, p. 569]; 4 — Spain, Paleolithic [753, p. 130].

of the nether regions, are in fact fish sculptures. Thus, a fish cult as such cannot show to what deity it refers. In many cases only the fact of fish veneration can be established.

Fish images are seen on carved stones in Daghestan and Chechnia (Fig. 380: 1, 2). They also decorate ritual objects of the Bronze Age Koban culture in North Ossetia [537, pp. 15, 16, 19]. Mountain dwellers far from seas and major rivers did not fish as an occupation; they did not even catch trout in mountain rivers and lakes. Therefore, if mountain dwellers depicted fish, it was not because fish had any significance in their diet. On the contrary, in many cases fish was not used for food. Adygeians, for example, living near the sea since ancient times, did not eat fish; neither did some tribes in Southeastern Asia and Oceania. The Greeks avoided eating fish, considering them sacred creatures. Fish were venerated by many peoples.

The ethnographer A. Robakidze expresses the following opinion concerning the mythicization of fish: veneration of fish was based, he says, on the circumstance that fish was a staple food in Mesopotamia, and was important in animal husbandry because fish meal was used as fodder [457, pp. 120-127]. As if the image of the pigeon is popular in our days because we subsist mainly on pigeon flesh. In Mesopotamia, as in other parts of Western Asia and in the Southern Caucasus, fish was not a major food for either people or cattle. A fifteenth century Russian author wrote that heathen Slavs "call the river 'goddess' and worship the creatures in the river as divine" [489a, p. 23]. Amulets shaped like fish were known in Europe since the Paleolithic and until recently (Fig. 380: 3, 4; 244: 1). How can anyone bring himself to account for all this by the influence of Mesopotamia, or by conjectures about a fish diet? If the fish was mythicized because it was a major foodstuff, how can this agree with the taboo on eating fish?

In Sumerian writing, the hieroglyph "fish" expressed the notions 'fertility' and 'reproduction' [231, p. 9]. The belief that fish may affect fertility or conception is expressed in certain Georgian rites [586, p. 321]. Judging by customs still in force in the Southern Caucasus, of using medicines made from fish against infertility and various diseases, the ancients saw a life-giving element in fish. What real facts, what rational considerations lie behind this "popular wisdom"? The only plausible explanation is that fish were associated in the mythological, irrational consciousness with the goddess, the bestower of fertility, and with the god, the bestower of health.

Early Christian drawings include representations of fish symbolizing Jesus. This is because Christ was regarded as a savior, and the peoples of the Orient had a myth about a fish which helped people and rescued them from calamities. A legend in ancient Indian texts says that Manu, the progenitor of mankind, was warned of the coming deluge by a deity in the image of a fish, and was advised to build a vessel to save his life. There are fish-shaped wooden idols in Buddhist monasteries, prayed to for help and salvation [796, p. 506]. The ancient Semite benefactor deity in the image of a fish was named Dagon; its Hebrew form is Dag, meaning 'fish' and 'protector.'

This Semitic as well as some Indo-European words for 'fish' correlate with the Proto-Indo-European name

for earth **d(h)eg(h)*. In Canaan and Phoenicia the deity Daghom, pictured as half-man, half-fish, was a patron of agriculture, fertility, and war. Hence the Hebrew *dagan* ('wheat') and *dagen* ('multiply'). In Assyria, Dakan was considered the "father of gods" and "creator of the world."

Some Neolithic sculptured fish images bear female signs. The fish is linked to the Great Goddess in graphic symbolism. One important aspect, however, rules out such a connection. The Great Goddess was regarded as a source of evil, whereas the fish was considered an incarnation of good; the Great Goddess caused misfortune, and according to some myths even intended to exterminate mankind (perhaps by the flood, for she is the one who sends rain), while the fish acted as a savior. Probably the deity in the fish image was not initially identified with the heaven goddess, and features suggesting to a connection between them emerged as a result of subsequent confusion: the notion of the heaven goddess as a mistress of heavenly waters could have developed into the notion that she was mistress of water in general. On the other hand, the good deity in the image of the fish was regarded as a version of a divine male benefactor, savior, teacher of people. In Ancient Mesopotamia the culture hero Oannes was pictured as half-man, half-fish.

The bird-goddess and fish-goddess were dissimilar deities in the Neolithic religion. Evidence concerning the whole goddess and virgin goddess also indicates two different deities. The sun goddess was a special female deity. In many myths a particular god or hero was nursed by a female being other than his biological mother. Consequently, the Great Goddess was not alone in the Neolithic religious and mythological system. Yet one can discuss mainly her with certainty, because nearly all the data on Neolithic female deities merge to produce one cumulative image.

It is quite possible that the association between the earth and a female deity, and between heaven and a male deity, typical of data which have reached us from the first millennium B.C. and suggested by recent ethnographic evidence, are connected with conceptions differing intrinsically from the cult and mythology system referred to conventionally as the "Neolithic religion" in this book. Otherwise, it would be difficult to comprehend the radical transformations undergone by the fundamental religious beliefs of the early farming period. In the concepts of the first tribes in history to advance to agriculture, the Neolithic population of Western Asia and Europe, the earth deity was male, evidently in continuation of a religious tradition inherited from the Paleolithic. It remains unclear what socio-cultural circumstances caused the earth deity to turn female.

The Sanskrit *mahi* ('great') is the title of the earth goddess Prit'hivi. As will be shown, this word is a variant of names for the Great Goddess (Ma, Mah, Maia). Prit'hivi of the Vedic texts has a dual nature, representing earth and heaven, sometimes also the waters; her definite association with earth is relatively recent [371b, p. 126]. The Roman earth goddess Tellus has certain characteristics of the Neolithic

earth god. Her name is masculine in form, she was offered sacrificial pigs, and festivals were held in her honor in April and December; her names Tellus or Terra match the name of the archaic earth god Tali, Tarh, Thor, or Tür. The Daghestanians still use an expression corresponding to the Indo-European "mother earth," but at the same time vague reminiscences remain of the "lord of the earth" [370, p. 5]. Characteristics of the former earth god were transferred to the later earth goddess in pre-Columbian America: in Kechua mythology the earth deity was called Mama Pache, which means 'mother earth,' but her idol was a stone — a typical attribute of the pre-Indo-European earth god.

This type of evidence does not, however, shed light on what caused the earth deity's change of sex. Neither is it sufficient to justify adopting the theory of evolution in beliefs, rather than their substitution by other beliefs.

The image of the earth goddess is obscure and dull compared to the distinct and full image of the heaven goddess. No myths are associated with her. She is represented only by a proper name or simply a title, such as *terra mater* (Mother Earth). There is nothing remarkable about the Indian Prit'hivi. The Roman Tellus, despite her honorary title Tellus Mater, did not enjoy special veneration. Zemina, who represented the earth for the Lithuanians and was offered gifts when a child was born, was both Zeme-mater (mother earth) and Zeme-patis (father earth).

Judging by known, though inadequately descriptive characteristics, the Indo-European earth goddess resembled the pre-Indo-European heaven goddess, as the Indo-European heaven god resembled the pre-Indo-European earth god. The impression is that for some reason the former deities were relocated during the post-Neolithic period.

This assumption is supported by certain linguistic evidence. For example, the Latin *humus* ('earth') and the German *Himmel* ('heaven') are etymologically related. *Ama* means 'mother' in Sumerian and 'father' in Evenkian; these words are etymologically related to the notion 'deity.' In Hebrew, words associated with the attributes of the archaic underworld god are feminine in gender: these are *ereš* ('earth'), *even* ('stone'), *eš* ('fire'), *ruah* ('wind'), *ir* ('town'), *keren* ('horn'), *šiboleth* ('ear of grain'), *šabbath* ('Saturday').

Without delving too deeply one might decide that the female deity of fire and the hearth was of a special nature and had nothing to do with the complex of early farmers' beliefs. S. Tokarev [519] lists data showing that to some ethnic groups of Siberia, Altai, and the Far East a female spirit patronized fire and the hearth. However, some of her characteristics make it possible to correlate her with images of Neolithic female deities. For example, the Kets' mythical keeper of the hearth was called Alalt, which corresponds to the name of the female demon Al or Allat, widespread from the Caucasus to Central Asia (it will be shown that the Neolithic Great Goddess was her prototype). Incidentally, Alalt of the Kets was not only the keeper of the hearth; she also helped in hunting [519, p. 16], which was a function of the Great Goddess. It is noteworthy that in some cases of the Eastern Asian female spirit of fire and the hearth had a male double. In Lithuanian mythology, there is also a female hearth deity, Gabie, with a male version, Gabis.

The Roman Vesta and the Greek Hestia are well known. An eternal flame kindled anew on the first day of the new year (the 1st of March) was maintained in the temple of Vesta. Apparently, Vesta was associated in origin with the Neolithic sun maiden. She was referred to as Virginis Saturnia (the Maiden of Saturn). At the same time, several features reveal her origin from the Neolithic Great Goddess. She was portrayed with her face veiled. Her accessories included a chalice, a scepter, and a torch. Her temple was circular. These characteristics link Vesta to early farmer and not Indo-European religious tradition. Vesta was chthonic, and that was probably why nineteenth century students of mythology decided that she and Hestia represented earth.

Hestia of the Greeks was a patroness of the hearth; her name itself means 'hearth.' But Hestia acquired this modest position in the Classical period. She was much more important in the archaic period. According to classical authors, all prayers started with mention of Hestia, and all sacrificial offerings to the gods began and ended with a tribute to her. Later, as her functions narrowed down, she became associated with fire alone. Herodotus mentions Hestia the Scythian supreme goddess Tabiti, whose name compares to the ancient Iranian *tapayati* ('fiery'). Xenophon called the sacred fire worshiped in Iran "hesta." This shows that female deities associated in origin with the image of the Neolithic Goddess, on the one hand, and representing fire, on the other, were common throughout Western Europe to Siberia.

The word *hestia* may be compared to the Hurrian *asti* ('wife, woman'), Vainakhian *asti-nei* ('mother'), and Basque *atso* ('old woman'). This etymology links Hestia to the Neolithic heaven goddess. Another possible etymological association is that of Hestia with the Neolithic sun goddess, later transformed into the Indo-European goddess of dawn Ušas, or Eos. All these names echo a name of the underworld god, which involves the root meaning 'fire' (the Nostratic **asa* [210a, p. 262]). Indeed, in Gaulish paganism humans sacrifices were offered to the ferocious god Hesus, and the Finno-Ugrian evil spirit was named Hiisi; this type of name in combination with the suffix *-i* produce the *asti* Hestia.

The available data thus suggest that the female deity of fire and the hearth, common to many peoples, was originally associated with female deities of heaven and of the sun, as imagined in early farmer mythology.

It is more difficult to deduce the origin of the female earth deity, particularly since there are no myths about the earth goddess, her image is rather dim, she has no characteristic features, and she rarely has any name at all.

Compared to her, much more vivid is the image of the Neolithic Great Goddess, the mother of all and the sovereign of the world. Ancient and medieval written sources, as well as ethnographic data have recorded many names under which later fragments of her former image appear.

One of them is Kybele (Cybele), the Phrygian goddess regarded as progenitor and mistress of all things living: nature, people, even gods [834, p. 336]. She possessed the power of producing or ruining the fruit of the earth [557, p. 42]. Her sanctuaries were built high in the mountains, she was referred to as the "mountain goddess." She was

pictured with a crown on her head and was sometimes accompanied by lions. Kybele was also held in high esteem in Rome, where, thanks to Sicilian Greeks, she received the title of Great Mother. As recently as the fifth century C.E. a statue of Kybele holding an infant was carried through fields and vineyards in France in hope of evoking a better harvest (the custom existed later as well, the difference being that the woman holding the infant now represented Virgin Mary).

The 1st of May festival was dedicated to Kybele. On that day the "May tree" was set up, a pole decorated with green branches, flowers, pieces of cloth; sometimes a woman representing the May queen rode in a cart. This holiday with corresponding rites was traditional in Western Europe until quite recently. It may have been adopted through the Romans, who borrowed it from the Greeks of Asia Minor. However, the wide popularity and persistence of these rituals indicate that they could not have been entirely due to Phrygian influence. That influence is difficult to account for unless one assumes that the image of the May goddess took root in the rich soil of archaic Greek, Roman, and Central European traditions.

Hecate of Asia Minor, as the ancient Greeks pictured her, was a sinister goddess associated with death. She was "omniscient," and known as a huntress. She was not infrequently represented with snakes in her hair, three-faced, or as a triple female figure. Aeschylus referred to Hecate as the Great Goddess. The dog, the underworld god's animal, was dedicated to her. As the Great Goddess was on intimate terms with that god, the Greeks, who had but a vague idea of the functions of the Neolithic deities, regarded Hecate as the mistress of crossroads.

Rhea, the wife of Kronos (Cronus) and mother of Zeus and other gods, was honored, like Kybele, with a crown on her head. Lions were dedicated to her. The tympan was her accessory, apparently not only because it was an instrument accompanying ritual dancing, but mainly due to its disk shape.²⁴⁵ Rhea was particularly venerated in Cyprus and in Asia Minor, where she was identified with Kybele. The Greeks called her the Great Mother. Rhea was not confined to Greek mythology: the Roman Rhea was the mother of Romulus and Remus, i.e., a mother of twins. It was already suggested that the names of Rhea (Rea, Rē) and the Egyptian Rā (Rē) could be related; the relationship can be understood if one assumes that Rā was initially the underworld god,²⁴⁶ and Rhea the heaven goddess, i.e., his spouse.

Demeter, Rhea's daughter, is another version of an image stemming from the archaic Great Goddess. She was the wife of Poseidon, the transformed pre-Indo-European underworld god.²⁴⁷ She could assume the image of a mare, and was a patroness of childbirth, marriage, and agriculture. The latter does not imply that she was an Indo-European earth goddess, as F. M. Müller concluded [778, p. 536]: the Neolithic heaven goddess was once regarded as the "mother of plants," and for that reason

²⁴⁵ The ancient Hebrews called the tymbrel "Miriam's drum," which shows that this object was regarded as an accessory of the priestess.

²⁴⁶ See chapter "The White God" for a substantiation of this hypothesis.

²⁴⁷ See chapter "The Black God."

was also a patroness of agriculture. An episode from a Demeter myth is illuminating: in anger she rendered the earth barren; that was exactly what the Great Goddess used to do — now she bestowed crops, now she destroyed them. Demeter's epithet was Erinya, meaning 'furious' [778b, p. 539]. Her name, however, means 'mother earth,' the archaic form being Dāmater.

The Arcadian Deo, a mother goddess and patroness of crops, portrayed with a horse head and with a pigeon in her hand, was identified with Demeter. It is noteworthy that Deohaco was the name of the earth goddess' "three daughters" in the Seneca American Indian tribe.

Demeter's daughter Persephone, Proserpina in the Roman tradition, is believed to have personified the earth's fertility. However, she exhibits certain features of the Neolithic Goddess (she was mistress of wild animals, patroness of hunting, and wife of the underworld god). On the Iberian Peninsula she was identified with a local goddess named Ateguina. H. Sicard compares this name with that of Atana, a supreme deity of northwestern African tribes, goddess of heaven and mistress of life and death [835, p. 235]. The Western Mediterranean Atana is, in turn, identified with an Eastern Mediterranean goddess Athana, transformed, in Sicard's opinion, into the Greek Athene. The latter name finds no explanation in Indo-European languages [787, p. 420].²⁴⁸ Athene's attributes — the snake and the bird — are the same as in representations of the ancient Cretan goddess. The myth of Athene includes a tree which she planted on the Acropolis, establishing her dominion there. Kranaos was one of Athene's names, probably because the Great Goddess was the wife of a god one of whose names was Kronos.

Hēra (Hera) is Zeus' sister and wife. She was apparently attributed these functions because the celestial throne had been occupied by a male god since the Bronze Age, and the Neolithic heaven goddess remained without a portfolio. Hera's origin may be judged, for example, from Homer's calling her "cow-faced" [787, p. 431]. She was a patroness of marriage and birth. The crow and the cuckoo were dedicated to her. The myths generally represent Hera as imperious, malicious, and vindictive, which points to her origin from the Neolithic goddess. She frequently quarreled with Zeus; this suggests parallels with a similar motif in legends of other peoples, indicating that thunderstorms were interpreted in Neolithic myths as fights between the heaven goddess and her spouse. Hera's name can be added to the list of other mythological names with the root *hr*²⁴⁹, to the ancient Egyptian *hr*, *hrt* ('heaven') and *hrw* ('day') may be mentioned as possible phonetic analogs.

The Roman parallel to the Greek Hera is Juno, Jupiter's wife, patroness of women and, in line with conceptions of Classical Antiquity, a moon goddess. The Etruscan Great Mother Uni was a prototype of Juno. The name Uni leads to that of the Mesopotamian heaven god An, Anu. Juno's name, with the Greek equivalent Zenon, and the Balto-Slavic equivalents Zivia and Zemina, may be compared

²⁴⁸ F. M. Müller believed that the name Athene originated from *athanathos* ('immortal') [778a, p. 378]. Other linguists consider this etymology erroneous. *Athana* is an ancient Syrian word for female donkey; as we now know, the male donkey was regarded as an incarnation of the Black God.

²⁴⁹ See chapter "The Black God."

to the Sanskrit *jānis*, Slavic *žona* ('woman, wife'), and Hebrew *zonah* ('prostitute').²⁵⁰ Hence apparently the words for 'winter' (Slavic *zima*, Hittite *gima*, Old Prussian *semo*, Sanskrit *himás*) and for 'earth' (Balto-Slavic *zeme*, Old Prussian *semme*, Latin *humus*), as well as the name of Western Asian god Yam or Yima.

Certain features of the Great Goddess' disposition were personified by the Greeks in the figure of Nemesis. Myths represent her as a powerful nature goddess, yet she has no specific characteristics other than incarnating divine wrath and divine punishment. Her image merges with those of either Themis or Aphrodite, other Greek female deities who can be traced to the Neolithic goddess. The Athenian feast dedicated to the dead was called *nemezea*. In Asia Minor there was a cult of "two Nemeses" [605, p. 240], who can be regarded as a double Neolithic goddess.

Themis, the Greek goddess of law and order, represents in a more dignified form the punitive function of the Neolithic goddess. Themis was portrayed as a blindfolded woman who meted out unbiased justice. But the bandage over the eyes of the female deity initially had the meaning of the veil over Kybele's head: it was there to cover the eyes of the goddess, lest her glance cause trouble.

Fortuna, a Greco-Roman goddess predetermining good and bad luck, although initially she was a patroness of crops and motherhood. She was also blindfolded. Fortuna's attribute was a wheel or sphere, both being heaven symbols. The original semantics of these symbols had been forgotten by the period of Classical Antiquity, and a different interpretation of "Fortune's wheel" thus emerged: it now symbolized shifts towards prosperity or adversity. The name Fortuna may be classified with a group of names and terms based on the image of the earth god with the root *f.r.b.r* and the suffix *-i*.

Aphrodite represents another function of the Great Goddess, personifying the female sex. She was portrayed in star studded garments; this cannot be accounted for by her own nature, but is rather due to the fact that she developed from the Neolithic heaven goddess. As reported by Pausanias, an archaic statue of Aphrodite represented the goddess armed. In an episode related by Homer, Aphrodite is awesome, which is at variance with the notion of the enchanting goddess of love.

Venus was the Roman parallel to the Greek Aphrodite. Why was the planet Venus named after the love goddess? During the Neolithic, the morning and evening star was associated with the Great Goddess, because it accompanied the moon, an incarnation of the heaven goddess' spouse. The crescent and star emblem, adopted by Islam from the Byzantines and by the latter from the ancient inhabitants of Western Asia, symbolizes this couple. The ancients considered the planet Venus as "evil star," the Romans associated it with Lucifer, the Phoenicians with Beelzebub, the Hebrews with Azazel, the Mayas with the serpent Kukulcan. Ancient Jews referred to the planet Venus as *barka* which has a common root with *barak* ('lightning'). American Indians and Polynesians offered human sacrifices to it. Pagan Arabs called it "almighty" and venerated it as a personification of the supreme goddess [371b, p. 545].

²⁵⁰ *Z.n* is the root of Hebrew words connected with the notion 'nourish.' *Mazon* is the Greek for 'female breast.'

The Sumerian *an* means both 'heaven' and 'star'; apparently in remote antiquity the notion "star" referred to the planet Venus only. This is also suggested by the fact that the Great Goddess' names, such as Ishtar and Astarte, sound very much like the names for star in various Indo-European languages (the Hittite *ašira*, ancient Greek *aster*, Latin *astrum*, and so on). This Indo-European appellation is accounted for by borrowings from the proto-Semitic **ašir* or **attar* for 'star, planet Venus.' Could there be a third, older source? The above data indicate that the mythicization of the planet Venus, from which the word for 'star' originated, goes back to very ancient times, and that the planet Venus represented the heaven goddess of the early farming period. The Hebrew *eshter* means not only 'star,' but also 'myrtle tree'; this may indicate that the name of the goddess was coined first, and from it originated the word for star and for the tree believed to be an incarnation of the Great Goddess.

The Neolithic goddess was also a prototype of Artemis (A. Evans and A. Frothingham have written on this). The Greeks considered her the mistress of wild animals and the patroness of hunting, as well as guardian of women in labor. Artemis was sometimes known as Lykia, an allusion to the fact that she was related to the wolf-god (*lykos* is the Greek for 'wolf'). She was also called "she-bear." "Heavenly" is one of Artemis' epithets. Strabo calls her "the Great Mother of earth" (despite her being a virgin). Artemis' attribute was a twig which was used for lashing cattle and children to make them healthy. She was sometimes associated with Hecate. Her name (of non-Indo-European origin) means 'killing' [787, p. 438]. Human sacrifices were offered to her in archaic times. Artemis was portrayed holding a stick, probably because she was the spouse of the god of whom it was an attribute.

Corresponding to the Greek Artemis was the Roman Diana. She was a patroness of fugitive slaves, as some male Roman gods, descendants of the pre-Indo-European earth deity, were patrons of plebeians and slaves. This is quite understandable: the descendants of the conquering Indo-European tribes constituted the nobility, whereas slaves and plebeians came from the autochthonous population which had professed the cult of the heaven goddess and earth god. Diana's name may be considered the feminine equivalent of the name of the heaven god Dios, the origin of which will be discussed in the chapter "The White God".

Ceres was the Roman equivalent of Demeter. She was a patroness of crops and marriage; at the same time she represented the world of the dead and inflicted insanity. She was especially honored by the common people. She was offered gifts at the beginning of sowing and the beginning of harvesting. Ceres had twelve different names. It is interesting to note that the Russians had twelve major Fridays during the year, represented by twelve female beings. During the feast of Ceres, women dressed in white offered the goddess wreaths woven from ears of grain. The Romans had a special goddess of birth and death, called Genita, Mana, or Cardea; she was not infrequently identified with Ceres [721, pp. 27, 29]. The name Ceres may be compared to Cernunnos, the three-headed underworld god of Gaul, and with Cerberus. Most probably, Ceres is a double of the archaic Italic goddess Kerres worshiped

in caves. The root of these names, *k.r.*, is incorporated in numerous mythological names and terms associated with the image of the Black God.

Mycenaean inscriptions mention the goddess Ma or Ma-Zivia (Zivia or Divia means 'goddess'), referred to as the "mistress." She was represented as a mother and a virgin simultaneously. In Cappadocia a goddess named Ma was worshiped during Classical Antiquity; she was identified with the Phrygian Kybele.

The assertion that words for 'mother' in Indo-European languages (Latin *mater*, Sanskrit *mata*, Old Prussian *muti*, etc.) derive from baby talk **ma* [543, p. 583] cannot be admitted, if only because the suffix *-t* remains unexplained.²⁵¹ There are words for 'mother' in non-Indo-European languages similar to those in Indo-European ones. Māta or Uma are among the Dravidic names of the mother goddess. The mother goddess of the Egyptians was Mut (*mw.t* — 'mother'). Maa or Maat was the Egyptian goddess of law and order, not infrequently identified with Isis and Hathor; she was chthonic in nature, was portrayed with a feather on her head and a five-ray emblem; pharaohs were her honorary priests. Mah was the ancient Semitic mother goddess [730b, p. 1042]; this word is part of the name of the Sumerian mother goddess Ninmah and of the name of the supreme goddess Mahamai worshiped by Dravidic Indian tribes. Mama was one of the names of the Great Goddess in Akkad. In Manchu mythology, Mamá was a patron of childbirth; notwithstanding this noble function, she dwelt in the world of the dead and had a frightening mien. In Daghestanian mythology, Mamóv was the name of the spirits who helped in childbirth, but were also malicious and inflicted diseases on children. The Daghestanians and Vainakhians use the word *mat* for 'language, people.' In Babylon, *matu* meant 'earth,' apparently associated with the notion "Mother Earth." Mama is the Nanaian (East Siberia) for 'mother.' The progenitor goddess in Ancient Peru was Mama. In Hebrew, *em*, *ima* mean 'mother,' while *ema* is 'fear, horror, terror.' The Serbian word *mama* means not only 'mother,' but also 'fury,' while in Russia the word *matka* (mother) was used for an allegorical reference to fever [543b, p. 581]. These words and terms have a masculine parallel: Mutu, Mot (*m.t* — 'death'); in Western Semitic mythology this was a name of the god of death and the underworld.

The word *māmā*, corresponding semantically to the form *mā*, may be a product of reduplication. The formant *-t* is an indication of feminine gender in Semitic languages; judging, however, by its presence in non-Semitic words, one can conclude that it already existed as such in pre-Semitic times in some languages of the early farming period. In the Hattian language, which is neither Semitic, nor even Nostratic, *-t* is also a formant of the female gender. Its presence as a suffix in names and terms associated with the male deity indicates that it served not only for the

²⁵¹ This word (like any other) simply could not have originated from the babble of an infant. A cruel experiment was carried out on several children: they were isolated very early from human speech. As a result, they could only imitate goat bleating they had heard. Babies never try to pronounce "Mama" or "Papa"; they are taught to do so by adults, and the child learns to pronounce these words no earlier than other simple combinations of sounds.

feminine gender (this will be discussed in greater detail later).

One Sumerian name for the primary mother goddess was Mama or Ama. The origin of the latter is unclear. On the face of it, it seems a truncated variant of the former. Yet much evidence points to it as independent; whatever the case, it is quite common. In Turkic, as well as in the Sumerian, *ama* means 'mother.' Ama was the name of the first mother in a number of ancient mythologies (Greek, Syrian, Scandinavian) and also a Japanese mythological designation for heaven. The name of the ancient Egyptian female monster Amamat seems to consist of *ama* and *mat*. Ama forms part of the Greek mythological name Amazon. The Egyptian and Western Semitic Amon (Aman) is the masculine parallel of Ama.

Maia was a Greek mountain nymph. Mayanel was an Aztec goddess of fertility. In ancient Indian texts, Maya was the mother of everything alive; she dwelt in heaven. The Roman Maia was a patroness of soil fertility; she was identified with the earth goddess Tellus, and was represented with an infant in her arms. In Ancient Rome, rites dedicated to her were performed on the 1st of May; in fact, the month was named after her. The names of these goddesses of the ancient Romans and Indians can be compared to the Sanskrit *mahi* and Latin *major* ('great') [778b, pp. 684, 685]. One may point out here that the word *maya* in Hindu religious philosophy means 'delusion, illusion.' Yet another comparison is possible: with the Nostratic word **mewa* for 'water, moisture,' from which derive, in particular, words for 'water' in Arabic — *ma*, *may* — and the ancient Syrian *maya* [210b, p. 62]. In Hebrew, *ma* is the root of *maim* ('water') and *šamaim* ('heaven, sky').

Some names and words with the forms *ma/mo+r* or *ma/mo+rt/rd/rg* may be associated with the image of the Neolithic goddess.

The Moirai (*moira* — 'destiny, fate') of Greek mythology (Parcae in the Roman) were the three goddesses who determined the course of human destiny. They were sometimes represented as two instead of three women. Plato described them as spinners in white, crowned with wreaths. The Moirai ruled birth and death; they were petitioned at weddings. It is apparently not accidental that their name sounds similar to the Slavic *mor* ('pestilence, plague'), Hebrew *mora* ('fear') and *mar* ('vicious,' 'bitter').

Mari is an ancient Cretan goddess, after whom the Egyptians named Crete Ay-Mari [730b, p. 1066]. In Buddhism there is an evil spirit called Mara. In Latvian mythology Mara is the spouse of the thundergod. In Western Europe Mara was an incarnation of nightmare. In the Caucasus the mythical patroness of bees was named Meriem. Mara, Mora, or Kikimora in Slavic mythology was an evil female demon with two souls, who drank human, especially children's, blood. Marana, Marena was a Slavic female personage who was given a ritual funeral at the end of winter. A female effigy called Marina or Marena was sometimes set on fire by the Slavs during the summer solstice festival [440, p. 84]. In a Russian tale a certain Marina has a love affair with a winged serpent [198, p. 192]. "Ivan and Marya" belong to Slavic summer solstice rites. Ivan is the same as Yan, Janus, or John the

Baptist, whose day was timed by the Church to this pagan festival; but what did Marya have to do with it? Myths involving the summer solstice mention a certain female who shows the sun its way; this is apparently the mother of the sun, i.e., the Great Goddess. Caucasian mountain dwellers dedicate a festival to a mythical female, Alardä, on John the Baptist's day [582, p. 82]; this will be shown below, Alardä is a relic of the Great Goddess' image. It follows that Marya was one of the Great Goddess names.

It is possible to list etymological associations of the names Mara, Marya, Marina. The Nostratic **marā* means 'tree' [210b, p. 45]. The Ukrainians referred to the ritual tree in the summer solstice festival as *morana*, *marena*, *mara* [492, p. 231], and the Hebrew name for a sacred tree, the date palm, is Tamar, which is also a feminine name. On the other hand, the Nostratic **mārā* means 'moisture, moist, wet' [210b, p. 60] (hence, in particular, the Sanskrit *mari* for 'rain').

The original affinity of names like Maia and Mara is confirmed by the fact that the notion 'moisture' in the Nostratic protolanguage was expressed by the words **mewa* and **mārā*. One can add the Nostratic **mārā* ('to be sick, die') [210a, p. 59]. It must, however, be noted that the Nostratic **mayra*, which resembles the above words, means 'a young male, son' [210b, p. 39], whence, for example, the Arabic *mar* ('man'), Semito-Hamitic *maru* ('ram, he-goat'). V. Illich-Svitych holds that some words dealing with women (in the sense "relationship to a man") also derive from **mayra*, such as the Lithuanian *marti* ('daughter-in-law') and *merga* ('maiden') [210b, p. 39].

The Nostratic **mārā* meant not only heavenly moisture, but also terrestrial waters, whence the Indo-European *mare* ('sea'), *mor* ('bog'); seas and lakes pertained to the sphere of the underworld god, rather than the heaven goddess.

Ancient Greek authors report that Artemis was referred to as Martis in Crete [787, p. 438]. In Hindu mythology the Matri are female spirits incarnating both creative and pernicious forces of nature. These names may be compared to words meaning 'death' in Indo-European languages (for example, the Latin *mortis*).

In this sequence of words and terms of the *ma/mo+rt/rd/rg* type the *t*, *d*, and *g* are obviously suffixes, secondary to *r*, which seems to be part of the root (for example, the Lithuanian *mirtis* — 'death' and *marūs* — 'mortal'). To put it differently, the corresponding words were most probably formed according to the scheme *m.r+t/d.g*. *Marg* is the Georgian for 'star,' apparently deriving from the name of the goddess associated with the evening star, the planet Venus. In some Iranian languages *marg*, *marga* mean 'death'; *mrga* was 'bird' in the Scythian language.

In the following chapter we will analyze male mythological names with the root *m.r* which, judging by available evidence, is a phonetic variant of the original **b.r*. In this case, the above root-word *mar*, *mor* was not formed according to the scheme *ma/mo+r*, but vice versa, the word *ma* was formed from it following the loss of the terminal *r*, which, owing to its phonetic characteristics, shows a tendency to be pronounced softly or to drop out completely.

The Egyptian heaven goddess Hathor (Hat-Hor) was portrayed as a cow; she was a patroness of love and dancing; veneration of trees was associated with her. Like Nut, she belonged with the world of the dead. Hathor occupied a minor position in the Egyptian pantheon, yet she was referred to as the "mother of gods" [639, p. 59].

Nor is the etymology of the name of the Vedic goddess of dawn Ušas sufficiently clear. In the chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers" we suggested that this name might have come from the Nostratic **asa* ('fire'). The name of the Greek goddess of dawn, Eos, may be a parallel to Ušas. The entire sequence of names: Išt, Hestia, Ištār, Astarte, Ušas, Eos, Eostre, Ostara could be regarded as stemming from a single protoform **asa+t*, if the formant *-r* which occurs in some of them could be accounted for. The terminal *-r* is similarly present or absent in the names of the underworld god Seth, Sata, and Satan — cf. Saturn and Satyr.

²⁵²The link between the names 'Ištar and 'Aštoreth and the ancient Semitic ²⁵³ mentioned above is doubtful, as the guttural consonant designated here by the sign * is different in these words (x and y).

The ancient Hebrews called their language Canaanite (Isaiah 19: 18). Modern linguists point to evidence that ancient Hebrew was inherited from the languages of the settled population of Canaan and adjacent

3: paper on the history of ancient Armenoids [379]). The Armenian language belongs to the Thracian-Phrygian group, suggesting that bearers of their protolanguage came from the Balkan Peninsula. But anthropologically the Armenians are descendants of the older population. Something similar happened to the ancestors of the Canaanites who assimilated a Semitic language (the very name of the country, Kna'an, meaning "subdued," is indicative of this). From 5000 to 2000 B.C., a nearly uniform culture existed on the territory covering the greater part of the Southern Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, and also Western Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and part of the Northern Caucasus (this is probably why some Caucasian mountain dwellers have "Jewish-type" faces). That culture is referred to as Kura-Araksian. Its artifacts are evidence that its bearers' rationalistic characteristics prevailed over their artistic ones. At the end of the third millennium B.C., this territory was conquered by other tribes. In some localities, for example the Southern Caucasus, the original population was exterminated (all the settlements of the Kura-Araks culture were destroyed and never revived). In other places, like the Armenian Highland, Phoenicia, and Canaan, the former population was numerically larger than the new arrivals. The same thing happened again when the 'Ivri came to Canaan. It must be concluded that the Hebrews were descendants of the oldest Palestinian population, and this is why the Neolithic traditions of the local early farmers were so steadily maintained among them.

be due to the similarity of the names of the god and the goddess. Such for example are the Nostratic **kul* ('snake'), **kūla* ('water reservoir'), **kūla* ('family, tribe'), **kal* ('ascend, summit, hill'), and **kajla* ('hot, burn').

The Elam pantheon was headed by the goddess Pinenkir, the unpredictable "mistress of the sky"; she was also called Kiririsha, meaning "the Great Goddess" [570, pp. 38, 39].

Nammu is the mother of all living beings, the progenitor of gods, in Sumerian mythology. Her titles are Ninhursag ('mistress of hills'), Ninmah ('Great Mother'), and Nintu ('great one who has given life'). Another female personage in the Sumerian pantheon related to the Neolithic Great Goddess was the heaven goddess Inanna, bestower of soil fertility. Her symbols were a ring with a ribbon (i.e., initially a circle with two sprouts) and a rosette (originally a heaven sign of the early farmers).

The name of Sumerian Inanna (she was also Innin and Ninanna) has a number of analogies in other mythologies. Akkadian Nanaia was a goddess of warfare and love; she was also venerated as the mother of all. Perhaps she was identical with Ištar. Corresponding to her were Nana in Asia Minor and Syria, and Naneh or Nanea in Armenia. In Greece, Attis' mother was named Naná. Artemis is referred to as Nanai in an inscription. A goddess named Nanaia was known in India [802, p. 43]. Anana of the Abkhazians was the patroness of hunting, apiculture, and childbirth; she enjoyed combing her hair; her personality was associated with the cow. Hence, probably, also the Chinese *nyan* ('mother'). Male mythological personages bear similar names; their character points to their origin from the Neolithic underworld god. Of this type, for example, is the Sumerian Nanna or Nannar, the moon god believed to have been born in the underworld and pictured as a bull. In Ancient India, Nandi was a sacred bull identified with a snake; Nanda was the lord of snakes. Naga or Naia was the name of a mythical serpent in India and Southeastern Asia.

Images from the Near Eastern early farmers' religion spread far beyond this region. They were assimilated by mythologies not only in Europe, Northeastern Africa, and vast territories of Asia, but also in the Far East, Black Africa, and pre-Columbian America. In China, for example, the goddess Tien-hun ('queen of heaven') was venerated; she was referred to as the "holy mother," despite the fact that she was considered a virgin. She was represented as a female figure with loose hair, holding a sword. In the mythology of Central America, Siuacoatl ('snake woman') was considered a universal mother (she was referred to as "our mother"); at the same time she was the goddess of warfare, dressed in white, sometimes two-headed and holding a child [371b, p. 440].

The Teutonic-Scandinavian Freya or Frigg was the goddess of sensual love. Her cult, like that of Kybele in Asia Minor and Semitic Astarte, had erotic elements. She was believed to know the destinies of all people, i.e., she was omniscient. She was pictured as a patroness of spinning and weaving and an indefatigable huntress. It was in her honor that noblewomen were addressed as Frau. Possibly the names of the goddess of warfare in Gaul, Fea, and of mythical fairies, etymologically related to her. Fjörgynn and Fjörgyn were the father and mother of Freya in Scandinavian mythology.

Despite the similarity between the names Freya or Frigg and the ancient country of Phrygia, this goddess, as pictured by Teutons, cannot be considered to have been borrowed from Asia Minor. Here again one can see an example of a situation where dissimilar peoples, sometimes separated by vast expanses, venerated the same deities. There is no evidence of veneration for a goddess with a name like Frigg in Phrygia; it is known, however, that Phrygian tribes that inhabited the Balkans were called Briggs.

The Celtic mother goddess was called Brigit, Bright. She was pictured as a bird and also as a woman holding a spear and a disk [371a, p. 187]. In Irish mythology, Brigit was the goddess of heaven and the guardian of the hearth (she was canonized as Saint Bridget, the patroness of Ireland). An eternal fire maintained by nuns was dedicated to her, as to Vesta. The ethnonym *Brit*, applied to Celtic tribes that populated the British Isles from the eighth century B.C. to the fifth century C.E., apparently derived from her name.

Berta or Perchta is a German female folklore spirit clad in white, patroness of spinners, characterized by her ugly appearance and known for stealing children; other names for her were Holde, Holle.

Medieval Russian written sources mention a female deity called Bereguinya. Scholars of Slavic paganism classify her as an earth goddess, though there are no grounds for this assumption. Bereguinya was associated with prayers for rain. Her relations with the underworld god whose rites have survived in elements of Christmas festivals can be seen, in particular, from the fact that the leading singer of Christmas carols in Galicia was called *berozia*; in Bulgaria the mask worn by carol singers was called *brezai* [87, p. 118].

Bereguinya, Fjörgyn, Brigit, and Berta are variants of the same name. Its ancient Germanic form is Virgunnia, which nearly coincides with the Latin *virginis* ('virgin'). These are assumed to be related to the name of the Russian thundergod Perun [198, p. 106].

The name of the Iranian Peri seems to be associated with this group of names. The Avestian *parika* is a female evil spirit, a witch, while the corresponding modern Persian *peri* is a good fairy. Peri is sometimes described as evil in Persian literature and folklore. A statement in the Avesta notes that "only some characterers" speak well of *parika*; this shows that she was not always considered evil. Students of Iranian culture cannot account for the controversial nature of this mythological image [62]; it must be due to the ambivalence of the Neolithic goddess.

Peri, like the Neolithic goddess, was linked with rain and water. A. Bertels believes that the name Peri derived from the Proto-Indo-European **per* ('produce, give birth') [62, p. 127]. This etymological connotation cannot be ruled out, but a deeper insight into the origin of this word leads one to a stratum of names and terms based on the root *p.r/b.r.*²⁵⁴ pertaining to the Neolithic pair of supreme divinities. The name and image of Iranian Peri may be compared to those of the Pei in Dravidic mythology. These are terrifying female demons with hair streaming in the wind, indulging in wild dancing and devouring corpses.

²⁵⁴See chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."

Medieval Russian sources report veneration of a female idol named Mokoš or Makoš (Mikeš among Western Slavs). Like Bereguinya, she is usually interpreted as an earth goddess [200, pp. 19-25]. However, some Mokoš' features point to her origin from the heaven goddess. She was a spinner, was associated with Friday [189, p. 50], and had a fish tail and a large head (the Neolithic goddess was sometimes portrayed as a female with a disk for her head, which symbolized heaven). A medieval source compares Mokoš to Hecate. A Russian saying goes: "God's not Mokoš and he'll do good." The meaning is that, unlike the Christian God, considered beneficent, Mokoš is unlikely to do anything good.

Other Slavic female deities are also known to possess features resembling those of the pre-Indo-European Great Goddess. An eleventh century Russian source mentions the goddess Divia. This corresponds to Mycenaean Zivia. A Western Slavic goddess had the name Žywe, Žyva, or Sivia. A sixteenth century Polish chronicle reads that celebrations in honor of Žyva took place at the beginning of May and that she was associated with the cuckoo [40c, p. 687].

Slavic folk songs name a certain Lada. A ninth century Prague manuscript identifies the Czech goddess Lada with Venus [489a, p. 132]. B. Rybakov objects to contentions by advocates of the antimythological school that there was no Lada in the Slav pantheon, and advances a number of arguments showing that the Slavs did have a mythological female personage with this name [475, pp. 393-409]. He points out, in particular, that Lada was honored on the 1st of May, that a written source dating from the 17th century mentions Lada as the mother of Lel and Polel (apparently the Twins), that there are expressions in Slavic songs such as "mother Lada" and "Lada the holy deity." Rybakov cites terms in pagan Slavic rites comprising the name Lada: *ladovat* is a verb meaning to glorify a wedding, *ladovanie* meant singing spring songs and telling fortunes on New Year's eve. However, Rybakov's opinion that the Greek Lada (Roman Latona) was borrowed by ancient Mediterranean peoples from ancient Slavs, cannot be adopted. The name Lada undoubtedly comes from the early farming ethnic medium. It can be compared to the Nostratic **lat* ('wet, moist, moisten') [210b, p. 31], and discerned not only in the Old Russian *lada* ('wife'), but also in the Urartuan *lutu* ('woman'), Lycian *lada* ('wife, mother'), and Avarian (in Daghestan) *ladi* ('wife').

There are several feminine personages in Greek mythology whose names resemble this word. Leda was visited by Zeus in the form of a swan and gave birth to the Dioscuri and their sister Helen. Leta was a chthonic female deity. Leto was the mother of Apollo and Artemis; she helped in childbirth, although sometimes she inflicted infertility and ruined families. According to a classical author, the oldest idol of Leto was a fetish in the form of an unfinished chunk of wood [371b, p. 52]. All these personages are related not only through their names, but also in their characteristics, which resemble those of the Great Goddess. The name and image of the Indo-European Lada have parallels in Western Asia: the Sumerian Lilith, the Arabic Lat, etc.

The female name Lada, Leta, etc., has analogies among male mythological names. Ladon in Ancient Greece was a

dragon, or a mythical dog, or the god of rivers. Latinus was the grandson of Saturn, son of Faunus, an eponym of the Latinians. Also among these is the ancient Greek word for the underworld, *latmos*, the Old Russian *l'ad* ('devil'), and the Russian and Ukrainian *l'uty* ('ferocious').

In pagan Ossetia an important position was occupied by Alardä, who possessed some characteristics of the Neolithic goddess. She maintained a certain position among Caucasian mountain dwellers until the end of the nineteenth century. According to Osset beliefs, Alardä was a spirit inflicting disease and other misfortunes on people. She acted so not out of premeditated wickedness, but she simply could not help it. If there was illness or death in the family, it was recommended to pray to Alardä, to thank her for visiting the house, to call her "good," and ask her to go elsewhere on her mission. Alardä was so feared in Ossetia that her sanctuary had no windows, and the door was on the side furthest from the settlement [582, p. 150]. She was imagined winged, and a sacred tree was dedicated to her.

During the festival in honor of Alardä women wore white kerchiefs, and the chalice for offerings was covered with a white cloth. A priest recited incantations with a white cloth on his head [12, pp. 380, 387]. At the same time, Alardä's priests dyed their moustaches red and attached pieces of white and red cloth to the tree dedicated to her; the goddess was pictured as a tall, fiery-red woman [12, pp. 379, 389].

The name Alardä is composed of two parts: *Al* proper and the affix *erdä*, meaning 'deity.'

There are images in Daghestanian folklore of the "woman Al," a nature spirit who dwells in a post in the middle of a room, and of a female demon Alpab, with hair down to her heels, evil and ruthless, bent on destroying mankind [17, p. 159]. In Iran and the Southern Caucasus, Al is a demon causing misery to women in labor [12, p. 420]. In Central Asia, Al or Albastä is an evil spirit in the guise of an ugly woman with loose hair and large pointed teeth [154, pp. 21-30, 229]. According to a Chechenian belief, a hunter can kill game only if a mythical woman named Almas lets him.

L. Chibirov, an Ossetian ethnographer, suggested that Alardä was the deity of healing [582, p. 151]; this is obviously unlikely. The Ingushian ethnographer B. Alborov, who devoted a lengthy paper to Alardä, concluded that she was in origin a fire deity [12, p. 420]. This too is mistaken, although a certain circumstance seems to support it: the Ingushian *ala* and the Georgian *ali* mean 'fire.' The affinity of the name of the female deity whose image goes back to the Neolithic heaven goddess, on the one hand, and the words for 'fire,' incarnation of the Neolithic and the underworld god, on the other, can be explained. Many male and female deities who were considered couples, had similar names: Diana was the wife of Dyaus (Jupiter), Fjörgyn, mother of Thor, was the wife of Fjörgynn, Faune of Faunus, Freya of Freyr, and so on. The names Alardä and Elia are also related; they come from the same root, and Elia is noteworthy that according to the Ossets, *al* or *el*. It is noteworthy that according to the Ossets, Alardä and the god Elia (the Christian St. Elijah), are closely related [582, p. 147]. But Elijah is the transformed Neolithic thundergod, in other words, the husband of the

Great Goddess. Memory of traditions is truly amazing: thousands of years after the collapse of the cult of the heaven goddess and underworld god they were remembered in their relation to each other.

When in the chapter on the Deer with the Golden Antlers we discussed possible connections of the appellations for 'deer' (the Nostratic **ili*), we compared words from the Nostratic thesaurus, such as **li* ('put to fire, burn') and **ela* ('to live'). Many words from different languages enter into this group, and their semantics, seemingly unrelated logically, is based on mythological factors. For example, there are the Latin *altaria* ('altar'), *altum* ('height'), *altercum* ('henbane') and *altrix* ('to nurse'), with the root *al* and suffix *-i*. Deriving from a single protoform are the Korean *al* ('grain, seed'), Old Icelandic *ala* ('feed'), Dravidian *al*, *ala* ('force, power'), Gothic *alan* ('to grow up'), and Tokharian *alym* ('life') [210a, p. 260]. The common nature shared by these words and names, arising from the religious-mythological perception of the world, is beyond doubt. This holds primarily for the ancient Semitic *il* and *ilat*. The name of the underworld god *il*, *El* or *Al* became the name for God in general: Allah of the Arabs, *El* of the Hebrews, *Ilu* (personified by the bull) of other ancient Semitic peoples.²⁵⁵ *Allat* is a female double of Allah. She was a pre-Islamic Arab Great Mother, mistress of heaven, and bestower of rain, portrayed as an armed woman. Ugaritic inscriptions mention a "mother of gods" *Elat*. Similar names are known in non-Semitic mythologies as well. The Sumerian queen of the underworld was named *Alu*; the Hurrian underworld god's name was *Al* or *Allalu*; Georgian songs mention *Alalu* and *Alatu* [482, p. 88]. The goddess' name in these examples sometimes has no feminine suffix *-i*; why this is so is unclear.

Alborov compares the name *Alardä* with the ethnonym of the inhabitants of Caucasian Albania, *Albi*, and the *Alarodians* of Western Asia mentioned by Herodotus. One may also include here the Altai (Ala-Tau) mountains in Central Asia, the *Halib* people whom Homer calls *Alib*, who lived southeast of the Black Sea, and the Daghestanian ethnonym *Albi*.

Some historians have concluded from this last that all of Daghestan was once part of Caucasian Albania. This misunderstanding stems from the fact that different peoples had similar names originating from the name of the same deity. The existence of the *Albi-Erdä* sanctuary in Ingushetia does not mean that Ingushetia was part of Caucasian Albania.

The root *alb/alp* is also incorporated in European ethnonyms and toponyms, for example, Albania in the Balkans, the Alps, and Alba, an ancient city in the Latinian region of Mount Albanus. In British legends *Alban* is the name of a people who once populated the British Isles; hence the ancient name of the country, *Albion*. In Greek mythology *Albion* was a giant, the son of Poseidon. In Roman mythology, *Alba* was the father of Romulus and Remus, i.e., it was the name of the father of the mythical twins. This

²⁵⁵In order to avoid misunderstanding, it must be remembered that two similar sounding root words, *li* and *la*, differ in meaning: the former means 'god,' the latter 'top' (the name of the Canaanite weather god *Eliou* stems from the latter; it can be interpreted as 'Most High' or 'located above').

series of words includes the Latin *albēns* ('white'), German *Albe* ('ghost'), Latin *alma* ('beneficial, nutrient, life-giving'), and the names of the rivers *Elbe*, or *Labe*, in Central Europe and *Laba* in the Northern Caucasus. It is believed that the Alps, Alba, and so on derive from the Latin *albēns* and that even the name for Caucasian Albania was devised by the Romans. However, in Sumer, there was a town called *Elbe*, and the Hebrew *lavan* ('white') is related to the Latin *albēns*. This category of words includes, apparently, the Latin *lupus* ('wolf') and *libido* ('sexual drive'), Russian *lebed* ('swan'), Hebrew *lavanah* ('moon') and *livneh* ('birch'), Phoenician *aleph* ('bull'), and Greek or proto-Greek *labris* and *labyrinth*. It may be assumed that all these words stem from the pre-Indo-European and pre-Semitic name of the Great Goddess and Great God **b/p,m*. Special linguistic research is needed to reveal the meaning of the formant *b/p,m*, yet some facts from mythology are worthy of attention in this connection.

The Basque *alaba* ('daughter') is composed of *ala* ('woman') and *ba*, **pa* ('son, child'). It is possible that *ba*, *pa*, *ma* are phonetic variants of an ancient word which meant birth. If this is so, the formant *b/p,m* combined with the stem *Al* means 'parent.' It is possible to regard *b/p,m* as originating from the initial name of the god **b.r* believed to be a progenitor, with the terminal *r* replaced by a vowel.

mi reduplicated produces *bābā*. The Slavs used this for 'woman' and 'grandmother,' the Turki for 'grandfather.' *Kubaba*, which may mean 'cow-parent,' was a variant of the name of *Kybele* in Asia Minor. The Georgian sun goddess was named *Kal-Babar* (the parent *Kali*?). The Turkmenian *Berkut-Baba* was the mythical "lord of rain" (he was also a patron of childbirth and of the underworld, and appeared as an eagle; this personage was daring and in conflict with Allah); all this points to him as the underworld god who rose to the sky. In this context, the origin of the Egyptian pharaohs' title *baba* [730a, p. 168] can be understood.

The Ukrainians believed in a certain "rye baba" whose whims affected crops. The Russians also believed in a female mythical being named *Baba*. B. Rybakov finds a similarity between this word and the Greek *Baubo* [475, p. 405; 730a, p. 187]. The parallel is obviously insufficient; as was shown, the word is not confined to Eastern Europe; even African Blacks have the female name *Babba*. *Bubah* is the Hebrew for 'doll'; possibly this word originated from the name of the goddess' idol *Baba*. The deity of bees and honey among ancient Baltic tribes was called *Bubilas*.

Baba-Yaga of Slavic tales possesses features which suggest her origin from the Neolithic goddess. She lives in a "hut on chicken legs" and has a "bone (i.e., bird's) leg" and long (i.e., bird's) nose. A Slovak belief says that *Baba-Yaga* had the power to send bad or good weather, and a fairy tale represents her sons as snakes. The name *Yaga* is presumably related to the Sanskrit *ahi* ('serpent') [40c, pp. 588, 589], linked etymologically with the Greek *Echidna* [371a, p. 50], a snake-like female monster. *Baba-Yaga* in fairy tales is not infrequently unseeing (probably because her predecessor was pictured without eyes or blindfolded); she has exaggerated female forms. *Baba-Yaga* is the mother and mistress of wild animals; she is villainous, tries to steal and devour children, though she can also hand out rewards.

V. Propp, who insisted that fairy tales have actual historical and sociological, rather than mythological roots, gets into a quandary when he tries to interpret the image of *Baba-Yaga*. Ultimately, he concludes: "The image of *Yaga* comes down from the totemic female ancestor" [439, p. 64]. However, there are no grounds for such a conclusion. The Kets of Siberia, far away from the Slavs and totally unrelated to them, also have a fabulous personage similar to the Russian *Baba-Yaga* [198, p. 120]; could this mean that the Kets and the Russians had a common totemic ancestor? C. Levi-Strauss remarks concerning such "historical" and "social" interpretations of mythology: "Suppose a certain mythological system assigns an important position to a certain person, say, a wicked old woman. We would then get an explanation that old women in that particular society were hostile to their grandchildren" [293, p. 152].

* * *

At the end of the third and beginning of the second millennia B.C., the principal foundations of the beliefs typical of the Neolithic period changed, probably due to the territorial expansion of Indo-European tribes and the strengthening of patriarchy. It is possible that the difference between the mythological conceptions recorded in traditions from the second and first millennia B.C., and the conceptions of the early farmers, was not only due to evolution, but was also to a certain extent indigenous, reflecting a special type of religious notions.

In the ancient cosmogonies of the majority of peoples, heaven and earth constituted a conjugal couple. Differences consisted in the concretization of these images in various cultures. Heaven was the sphere of the female deity and earth of the male deity in the early farmer religion; we reconstruct it. This follows, in particular, from the meaning of the graphic symbols analyzed in this book. Moreover, evidence pertaining to Roman, Greek, and other ancient goddesses shows that a rule they represented heaven (although they affected terrestrial crops). All Ancient Egypt goddesses personified heaven, and none earth; in the language of the ancient Egyptians the word for 'heaven' was feminine in gender and that for 'earth' masculine [767, p. 22]. The Etruscan eight-shaped object in Figure 276: 7 represents the Gorgon head in the upper part, and in the lower the head of what seems to be a male being with a snout (the wild boar was associated with the earth god); this composition can be understood as illustrating the notion that the goddess was of the "upper regions" and the god of the "lower regions."

A different notion, however, also existed: heaven was associated with the male principle, earth with the female, while the male god in heaven was supreme in the pantheon. In the *Rig-Veda*, the heaven god *Dyaus* was called "father," and the earth goddess *Prit'hivi* "mother" [778b, p. 495]. The Russians had a saying "You, Father Heaven, you, Mother Earth" [40c, p. 778]. Homer addresses a hymn to the earth goddess, the "mother of all things" and "wife of heaven" [670, p. 55]. The goddess of the early farmer cultures bestowed rain, yet in Indo-European mythology the heaven god impregnated the earth goddess with rain; the *Rig-Veda* uses the word "father" not only for heaven,

but also for a rain cloud [778b, p. 531].

The correlation between heaven and the male principle, and earth and the female principle was typical not only of Indo-Europeans, but also of the peoples of Eastern Asia, Indonesia, Oceania, Ugro-Finns, Sumerians, African Blacks, and American Indians. Corresponding data, either from written cosmogonies or ethnographic accounts of mythological survivals, come from periods no earlier than the second millennium B.C. Nothing is known of the earlier beliefs of the inhabitants of those territories (or of the former inhabitants of territories presently populated by these peoples). It can, however, be established that early farming Neolithic tribes from Western Europe to India till the third millennium B.C., had an opposite notion. Studies of European Paleolithic cultures also reveal a mythological association between heaven and a female image. It seems undeniable that the incongruous Neolithic notion that the heaven goddess produces vegetation, clearly the function of earth, stems from the pre-agricultural beliefs of European Paleolithic tribes. As concerns the Neolithic, the notion could have been held only by tribes within the sphere of early farmer cultures. In any case, in the light of contemporary knowledge it appears out of the ordinary, whereas the Indo-European correlation between heaven and the male principle, and earth and the female principle became common.

The image of the earth goddess is indeed quite inconspicuous in Indo-European mythology. This is not due entirely to the fact that the deity occupied a lesser position in the cult. Earth was still held in comparatively high esteem, as is corroborated by the expressions "mother earth" and "holy earth," by ritual kissing of the soil, swearing by it, and a negative attitude to striking it. A different reason for the vagueness of the Indo-European earth goddess seems more likely. Specifically Indo-European mythology is generally not well defined. What seems Indo-European in the sphere of myths, beliefs, and rituals turns out to be early farming in origin, adapted to the main principles of Indo-European conceptions. Autochthonous populations prevailed numerically among the ancestors of those who assimilated the languages and religious principles of the Proto-Indo-Europeans during the second millennium B.C. Their culture stood at a higher level than that of the invaders, and their artistic expression was more developed. Their myths must be assumed to have been more vivid.

Compared to the meager information on the Indo-European earth goddess, the data on the Neolithic goddess are much more abundant, notwithstanding the fact that her cult became obsolete as early as the Bronze Age. The change in religion was neither absolute (numerous early farmer beliefs and rites were incorporated in the spiritual life of new peoples), nor rapid (for example, elements of the veneration of the Neolithic goddess can be traced among Northern Caucasian mountain dwellers as late as the end of the nineteenth century; in Scotland, traditions featuring the heaven goddess are alive even now [756, p. 173]; the Russians have an expression "queen of heaven").

Still, a religious revolution, although not total and going on over millennia, did occur. It was due not only to the subjugation of alien tribes by Indo-Europeans and Semites, with the newly formed ethnic communities adopting the

languages of the conquerors. Some other, apparently socio-cultural, processes also led to the change in beliefs.

In the third millennium B.C., i.e., even before the active expansion of Proto-Indo-European tribes began, and on territories unaffected by Indo-Europeanization, male gods began to replace goddesses.

In Ancient Egypt, the heaven god Hor, in particular, was venerated. From at least the turn of the third millennium B.C., he occupied a more significant position than the heaven goddesses Nut and Hathor. Male deities, including the heaven god An, from whom the Babylonian heaven god Anu was adopted, occupied a leading position in Sumer, judging by written evidence from the end of the fourth and beginning of the third millennia B.C. In Elam, the "mistress of heaven" Pinenkir or Kiririsha ceded to the "lord of heaven" Humpan in the second millennium B.C. [570, p. 40].

During the events which shook Europe and Western Asia at the end of the third and the first half of the second millennium B.C., probably not only armed struggle took place. Many broken Neolithic female statuettes have been found [381a, p. 199] — does not this indicate a religious conflict? Former gods became adverse mythological personages. This process was not confined to Indo-European peoples. Thus, the earth god turned into the despicable devil in Semitic traditions as well. But while the Semites continued to venerate the goddess, though they lowered her in rank in the pantheon, she completely disappeared among Indo-Europeans, disintegrating into numerous personages who incorporated only some features of her former image. Nor did these personages always have the stature of gods; they were often reduced to the position of demons. The Cretan (probably also the Pelasgian) goddess was portrayed with snakes on her head, inspiring the Greek tales about the snake-bearing Medusa. The Greeks also had legends about an evil female giant carrying a child on one arm and destroying the fruits of human toil with the

other. The Neolithic goddess was sometimes pictured as a half-woman, half-fish, hence the Greek Siren, who lured mariners to destruction by her singing.

It is natural that women were responsible for the cult of the goddess. Hence the notion, going back to the Paleolithic, that capacities for witchcraft are inherent in women. The Great Goddess was the mistress of fate. She was believed omniscient. In some languages the word for 'know' comprises the root *ved*; her priestesses could be called by a similar word, as in the Russian *vedma*, meaning 'witch.' The *vedma* is not restricted to the role of sorceress: she is a supernatural being in the guise of a woman, associated with the devil.

Witches among Indo-Europeans earned the same reputation as the partner or their goddess, who became the contemptible devil. The Great Goddess was the wife of the earth god pictured as a serpent; witches were attributed the ability to tame snakes. According to other traditions, disguised as fiery serpents they sucked milk from cows. They got into and out of houses like the money-bearing serpent, through the chimney. They injured people with the help of the ashes of a burnt he-goat [40c, pp. 464, 475, 487], an incarnation of the underworld god. Witches performed their craft with iron objects, since iron was an attribute of the earth god. A witch could turn into a bird, a dog, a wolf, or a frog [172, p. 381], all of which beasts played a conspicuous role in the Neolithic cult.

The Inquisition persecuted women suspected of relations with the devil. The witch hunt, however, was not a product of the inquisitors' imagination: it was based on ancient beliefs. Arbitrary reprisals against women accused of witchcraft were common in Russia even in the nineteenth century [172]. Neither was burning of sorcerers and witches invented by the Inquisition; it was an ancient custom, also known in Russia [40c, p. 612]. It came from the times when Indo-Europeans believed that droughts, crop failure, diseases, and other misfortunes were caused by the adherents of enemy gods.

THE BLACK GOD

Medieval sources, as well as folklore and toponymical data, suggest that there was a certain Black God in Slavic paganism. Information about him is scarce. Nevertheless, we will try to establish his essence. For lack of other approaches, we shall start with hypothetical constructions. If hypothetical or not quite authenticated data coincide and agree with other known evidence, it will indicate that the reconstruction is valid.

Only two Slavic pagan deities are characterized by the color black, Threehead and Blackgod. Both are involved in fortune-telling. These circumstances have led V. Ivanov and V. Toporov to suggest their possible identity [200, p. 49]. Threehead, as was shown in the chapter "The Holy Trinity," appears to be the triple earth god; consequently, Blackgod is also the earth god. The fortune-telling aspect is not accidental; it implies that the being possessing such an ability knows people's destinies. Apart

from the Great Goddess, this being could be her partner, for who would be the master if not the mistress' mate? The earth god was the Great Goddess' spouse. Indeed, the epithet "omniscient" was sometimes applied to mythological and legendary personages who can be associated with the Black God (compare the Great Goddess' Russian name *vedma* which means 'knowing').

The tenth century Arab author al-Masudi reports seeing a Slavic temple on a Black Hill; the temple was dedicated to the god he refers to as Saturn. As has been established, the Roman Saturn was a survival of the Neolithic earth god. Since the temple al-Masudi saw was situated on a Black Hill, it was presumably dedicated to the Black God, considering that the Slavs had virtually no other god associated with the color black. The association of

²⁵⁶ See chapter "The Bull-Moon."

the name Black Hill with the deity whose temple was situated on it is also confirmed by the fact that black was the color of the Roman Saturn and of the planet Saturn in Assyro-Babylonia. This is further proof that the Slavic Blackgod was the earth god. Describing the god's statue, al-Masudi speaks of various reptiles depicted at its feet; these creatures were associated with the terrestrial, aqueous, and subterranean world. This also corroborates the assumption that Blackgod was the earth god. The very location of the temple on a hill may also indicate that it was dedicated to the earth god.

It may be surmised that the hill mentioned by al-Masudi was named after the deity whose temple it bore. There are quite a few Black Hills in regions inhabited by Slavic peoples; so this deity must have been very popular. He was most probably a major deity, otherwise why should a visitor from far away write about him? The god of earth was a major male deity in the Neolithic system of beliefs we are reconstructing. We have good reason to turn here to the Neolithic religion because, as far as we know, there was nothing "black" among objects of worship in essentially Indo-European beliefs.

Slavic expressions such as "May you be killed by Blackgod" or "May Perun kill you" have been recorded [200, p. 74]. Blackgod thus had a reputation as a powerful and awesome deity. This is also applicable to the earth god, one of the two sovereigns of the world.

Black figures frequently in popular rites calling for rain [558, pp. 86, 87]; and according to archaic beliefs, rain was caused by the underworld god. Black was generally associated with the "water spirit," who was also the god of the lower universe. This, too, means that the Black God was the same as the earth god.

F. Dölger, in a study which contributes much to an understanding of the relation between the Black and White gods, asks: "Why do different peoples associate the demon, and the related evil and death with black?" [662, p. 65]. For example, the Egyptian Seth, the Greek Typhon, and the Christian devil are all black. To the ancient Greeks and Romans "black" was a characteristic of something dangerous and horrible and, as in our times, designating evil, moral adversity. Dölger holds that this connotation of black was based on the light-dark opposition, as the sun symbolized favorable phenomena.

This, however, does not seem quite correct. Seth in Egyptian myths did not oppose the sun. Typhon was an adversary of Zeus, not of the sun. The sun proper became a symbol of good only at a certain stage of the evolution of religious concepts.²⁵⁷ Besides, the positive symbolic meaning of the color white was not its sole property: the Great Goddess, by no means an incarnation of good, was considered "white."

It is most likely that black was attributed to the earth god because he resided underground, where darkness and the blackness prevail. The early Christian definition of the devil was "lord of darkness" [662, p. 49]. The earth itself is black. That archaic conceptions associated black with underground darkness, rather than with evil, is confirmed by the Hittite expression "black earth" which implied the

²⁵⁷ See chapter "The White God."

mythical underworld. Black became a symbol of death and evil because they were seen as issuing from the death-dealing deity dwelling in the darkness, in the earth's interior.

There is a fair amount of information on the earth god to be found in the myths of various peoples. In addition to data already quoted, there is evidence making it possible to reconstitute the image of this personage typical of the pre-Indo-European, early farmer religion. The Slavic Blackgod is only one of numerous later incarnations of the Neolithic earth god dethroned during the Bronze Age. This chapter is entitled "The Black God" simply to use a conventional name for the deity. Only very relatively can he be called "earth god," because representing the earth was not his only function. He also represented the underworld, the waters of the lower universe (rivers, seas, and oceans); he was the father of the world, lord of fire, patron of agriculture and trades, created thunderstorms in the guise of a fiery serpent, ruled the world of the dead, and was no less ferocious than his spouse.

It is not entirely certain that all these functions were associated in the early farmers' religion with just one deity. It is possible that the lower universe was represented by several personages. Various creatures of the animal world — beasts of prey, herbivorous animals, and reptiles — were incarnations of the Black God. From the point of view of contemporary logic it is difficult to comprehend how all these creatures could represent the same deity. It is impossible, however, to differentiate between the various data on the personage here called the Black God, and to relate these data to distinct mythological personages. Perhaps the Black God dealt with here is a collective image. Yet more probably he was one deity with various functions and manifestations.

How was the Black God imagined? Judging by numerous data, he was pictured as both anthropomorphic and theriomorphic. His most common anthropomorphic characteristics were "giant" and "old man." He was a giant because he had supernatural powers and great strength, and an old man because he was a progenitor (the notion that he was an old man did not contradict his possessing uncommon sexual potency). One of pharaoh's titles was "old man." The Russian word *starik* ('old man') comprises the root *s.t.r* associated with the Black God, and the Proto-Indo-European **k'ér(ont)* for 'old man' comprises the root *k.r* which, as will be shown below, is also part of many names and terms associated with the Black God. The word for 'beard' in Indo-European languages is composed of the root *b.r* which is one of the Black God's principal names, and the formant *t/d* which, judging by the fragmentary data available, was the suffix of belonging in ancient Near Eastern languages.

The ancient Egyptians considered the beard a sign of divine rank, and nobody was permitted to wear one; only pharaoh attached an artificial beard to his chin on special occasions. The Judaic religious tradition, on the contrary, not only forbids shaving off the beard, but even trimming it; the beard is sacred. The Russians did not cut their beards in olden times; when on Peter the Great's order the beard was cut off, it was preserved in order to be buried with its owner, so that he might present it to the underworld lord. The Russians believed that if a sorcerer's beard was

shorn he would be deprived of his magic powers. Celtic priests did not trim their beards, but common people were not allowed to wear theirs [865, p. 61]. The Abkhazian god of hunting was pictured bearded, ■ was the Hittite god Lamu, somehow associated with the stag [10, pp. 20, 23]. The Slav Perun was ■■ "old man with a beard." In ■ Daghestanian fairy tale a certain spirit with a beard pointed "like a he-goat's" was believed to bring misfortune or riches [370, pp. 170, 171]. Growing ■ beard as ■ sign of mourning among Europeans and Caucasians must be due to the fact that it was associated with the underworld god.

Judging by medieval written evidence, the Slavic Blackgod was a source of evil. Is there any male creature in European or Western Asian mythology in whom evil is an essential characteristic and who can thus be identified with Blackgod? There is: the serpent. But as is known, the serpent personified earth. So if the analogy is correct, Blackgod is the earth god.

The serpent has another characteristic feature which connects him to Blackgod: he was also associated with mountains. Indra slays the dragon dwelling on a hill. Hittite rituals include worship of ■ mountain ■ the thundergod's residence [198, pp. 10, 99]; but (without so far touching on another mythological personage, the serpent's adversary, who also created thunderstorms) the fiery serpent was the one who caused thunderstorms. The serpent in Russian folklore was often called Gorynyč, not because he inflicted misfortune (*gore*), but because he lived on ■ mountain (*gora*). The word *gore* sounds like *gora* — 'mountain', an attribute of the Black God. A Russian tale tells about misfortunes coming from the underground [200, p. 104]. The underworld is the realm of the mythical serpent, whom the Rig-Veda calls "the serpent of the depths." This serpent has an unusual appearance: he has horns and, according to some sources, a beard [108, p. 484]; besides, he has wings.

A characteristic feature of the mythical serpent is that if he likes you he can make you rich. Russian fairy tales tell about a money-giving serpent who enters your house through the chimney²⁵⁸ and promotes well-being of the home. An ancient Egyptian text calls the serpent the "one who brings gifts" [766b, p. 69]. Legends about a serpent who bestows prosperity and brings gifts are shared by many peoples [198, p. 154]. In the chapter "Snake-Water" we remarked that the serpent was considered an owner and guardian of treasures; hence the belief that he could confer them.

An odd superstition current in Russia until quite recently, associated with the ancient belief that the Black God bestowed wealth, was that cockroaches favored the well-being of the household where they bred. This belief must have been due to the fact that cockroaches are black and dwell in dark places. The very word *tarakan* ('cockroach') confirms the assumption that they were associated with the Black God. The word obviously has the same root as such names of the Black God as Tarḥ and Tarkomn; corresponding to the Old Russian name of the Taman Peninsula, Tmu-Torokn, is the Byzantine Tama-Tarḥa.

²³⁸ There was a superstition in Western Europe that an encounter with a chimney-sweep promises good luck; this popular belief reflects the semantic association between the notions "chimney" and "wealth."

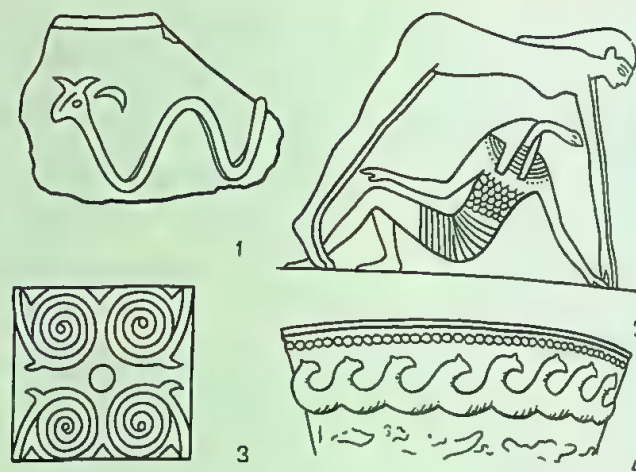


Fig. 381. Serpent as earth god: 1 — Yugoslavia, Neolithic [696, p. 96]; 2 — Ancient Egypt [347, p. 38]; 3 — Malta, Neolithic [381a, p. 309]; 4 — Rumania, ca 400 BC [381b, p. 318].

The ancient mythicization of gold may indicate that the underworld god was associated with treasures found in the earth. Myths of different peoples express the notion of a connection between the world of the dead and gold, precious stones, and riches. Gold has in fact been a cult attribute since the most ancient times. Hence also certain beliefs, for example, that water from a gold cup has healing properties, washing with water from a gold vessel averts lightning, and dropping coins into a water reservoir can bring luck.

Judging by a Mesolithic picture (Fig. 337: 9), there already existed at that remote period the image of a serpent guarding a tree, which is found in the oral traditions of many peoples. This serpent dwelt among tree roots, i.e., within the earth [198, pp. 36-38]. The serpent here is a representative of the earth's interior, as also shown in abstract symbolic graphemes (Fig. 128: 7). The Egyptian earth god Gheb was called the father of snakes [766b, p. 69] and was represented as having a snake head (Fig. 381: 2).

A Hellenistic Egyptian name for the underworld god is Serapis. Although this name is held to be a late syncretic invention, there can be no doubt that it is etymologically related to the Latin *serpens* ('snake'). The lord of the underworld in Indian mythology was named Serpent and was symbolized as a snake. It is of interest that though Serpent personified the world of the dead, he was believed to be an incarnation of vital energy, a characteristic feature of the earth god. Similarly, Egyptian Serapis was venerated not only as the lord of the underworld, but also as a bestower of fertility and a divine healer. *Saraph* is Hebrew for 'snake'; the same word means 'burn, put fire to,' since the earth god in his manifestation as a serpent was associated with fire.

Slavic tales about grass snakes with golden horns have been recorded [521, p. 52]. The horned serpent story was common several thousand years ago on territory now inhabited by the Slavs (Fig. 381: 1). In this picture there is a crescent, an emblem of the bull, next to the serpent. The bull, as shown above, was an incarnation of the deity of the earth; the serpent has horns because he is an incarnation of the same deity.

The four spiral design (Fig. 381: 3) is an ideographic variant of the notion of the four corners of the world, composed of four earth symbols; the spiral here carries a sprout, which is a stylized representation of the horned serpent. The image of the horned serpent was incorporated in symbolism and became an ornamental element; it is frequently encountered in ancient works of decorative art (Fig. 381: 4).

The demonic serpent of Russian fairy tales has several heads. This is because, as was shown above, the earth god was considered three-fold or (three times three) ninefold. A different hypothesis regarding the origin of the many-headed serpent is also possible. Lightning branches off, and if the lightning is reckoned to be a serpent, ramifying lightning represents a many-headed serpent.

It used to be thought that when a man died, the lord of the underworld or the mistress of heaven had taken him. People killed animals for food and believed that gods killed people for the same purpose. There is an image of snakes devouring corpses in Lithuanian fairy tales; Slavic tales describe an all-powerful serpent demanding human sacrifice.

Thus, we see that Blackgod was attributed functions not only of an earth god, but also of the lord of the underworld. That is why the hero in fairy tales descends underground or into a cave in order to enter the abode of the serpent.

The mythical serpent not only resides in the earth's interior; he also flies in the sky. The demonic serpent of Russian tales is winged. The winged serpent was one of the most popular mythological personages of pre-Columbian America: he bestowed rain, was the patron of agriculture, the master of winds, and the guardian of hidden treasures; the cross, a sign of the four directions of the world, was his emblem. The winged serpent is encountered in ancient Egyptian pictures. In Ancient China, the winged serpent was a major object of veneration. In Korean mythology, the winged serpent *Kuron'i* was a guardian of the dwelling and bestower of wealth. A flying dragon with a snake head was known to the Sumerians [84], p. 215]. A snake with strange extensions on tail and neck can be distinguished in a Paleolithic design (Fig. 382: 4); it too is probably a winged serpent.²⁵⁹

What is behind this peculiar image? What objective conditions, natural or social, could have produced the image of the flying serpent in different parts of the world, in different epochs, and in entirely dissimilar cultures?

V. Propp outlines ■■■ answer. The world of the dead was somewhere in heaven or under the ground; people saw birds in the sky and snakes creeping from the ground; this led to the idea that the souls of the dead were transferred to birds and snakes; hence the hybrid image: the bird plus the snake equals the dragon [439, p. 227]. In other words, the flying serpent is the soul of the dead which went to both hell and paradise.

However, neither the image of the flying serpent of Russian tales, nor the stories related to it confirm this interpretation; V. Propp, a specialist in Russian folklore, could have taken note of this. Nor does the venerable

²⁵⁹ This enigmatic Paleolithic design is interpreted differently by various authors. In particular, an opinion has been expressed that it represents fishing [126].

scholar see other incongruities in his theory. Indeed, why should the flying serpent have many heads and be horned; why should he be identified with the bear and the wolf; why should he reside not only under ground, but also in water; why, being dead, should he belch smoke and flame, possess treasures, subsist on human flesh, and be a womanizer? In another part of his book *Historical Roots of Fairy Tales*, Propp offers ■ different interpretation of the mythical serpent: the battle between the thundergod and the serpent reflects an actual historical situation, and the serpent is "entirely meaningless" outside this context; "he is a historical phenomenon which changed its functions and forms" [439, p. 259]. However, the semantics of this fabulous creature becomes clearer if one sees it as a deity with specific properties, rather than a reflection of real historical events and ways of living. It must also be admitted that ■ this image was not determined by objective factors, but was rather a product of irrational thinking, it could not have emerged repeatedly and spontaneously, so that its appearance among different peoples must have been due to a diffusion of ideas.

It has already been shown through a number of examples that the earth god was thought to be present not only in the sphere of the lower universe, but also in heaven (presumably so that he could communicate with his spouse). And if the serpent ■■■ a typical incarnation of this deity, it had to possess wings to rise to the sky.²⁶⁰ Of the many creatures which were embodiments of the Black God, the serpent was imaged winged because people saw it in the sky — as lightning. It was lightning which must have suggested the idea of the fiery serpent. A Russian fairy tale describes the flight of the serpent like this: "It thunders, the earth shakes, the dense forest bends its crowns: the three-headed serpent flies." This is obviously an image of the creature that causes thunderstorms. An ancient Greek myth offers ■■■ analogy to this Russian image: a snake-like monster covered with feathers, named Typhon, belched smoke and flame ■■■ it produced a storm; related to this name is the East Asian word *typhoon* [730b, p. 1617].

Lightning, then, was seen as a fiery serpent. There could also have been another basis for the fire-related nature of the Black God: inasmuch as he dwelt underground, volcanoes ejecting smoke and flame could be considered his breathing.

So lightning was the serpent, and the serpent was an incarnation of male sexual power. It was in connection with these fantastic conceptions, and not through objective realities, that there emerged the myth of Zeus in the guise of lightning fathering Dionysus. In the ancient Chinese language the word for the 'crash of thunder' was etymologically associated with the notion 'to become pregnant' [371a, p. 654]. Lightning was pictured in Ancient China as a mythical male creature. However, in that country, as throughout Eastern Asia, the earth deity was female, so the deity of lightning in China turned female in the course of time. This is further confirmation that the mythological

²⁶⁰The notion of the feathered deity of the lower regions gave rise, in particular, to another odd image: ancient Egyptian texts mention a supernatural creature, a crocodile with a feather on its head [766b, p. 169].

images of lightning and the earth god were identical.

In the biblical story about the temptation of Eve God cursed the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Are there in reality any particular relations between women and snakes? These words echo the ancient myth about the hostility between the Great Goddess and the underworld serpent.

Indeed, as appears from textually recorded ancient myths, the relation between the supreme god and goddess were far from idyllic. Jupiter and Juno fought; so did Zeus and Hera, Gheb and Mut. Athene had rows with Ares, sometimes coming to blows. Quarrels between the Great Goddess and the Great God seem to be illustrated in a Harappian design showing the goddess fighting a tiger. Other mythological data which have reached us in the form of later and fragmentary folkloric evidence also indicate that the Great Goddess and the Black God often had rows, as befits spouses with violent dispositions. The ancients apparently perceived thunderstorms as a row between the divine spouses. In some traditions the thunderstorm is, indeed, interpreted as a conflict between a god and his wife [198, p. 151]. In a Vainakhian legend the tears of Tusholi (i.e., rain²⁶¹) were caused by Erdä's attempt to rape her (Erdä has the characteristics of the Black God: he was pictured as a he-goat living in a mountain cave); this legend seems to reflect the ancient myth about the confrontation between the heaven goddess and the earth god. A Daghestanian fairy tale relates that a woman and her spouse, the serpent, were the first living beings; they were adversaries, and the woman triumphed [370, p. 162]. The Sumerian mother goddess was in conflict with her spouse Enki and intended to kill him. In another Sumerian myth, the heaven mistress Inanna fought the lord of the underworld, Kur, to make him submit to her superiority; she won and established her dominion over the world. This myth retained its authentic connotations, assimilated by the Sumerians from their predecessors, the early farmers. In the course of time, however, the myth underwent changes, and new versions emerged. In a Babylonian myth the warrior god Marduk defeated the female monster Tiamath; the Kets have a story about the "wife of the thundergod" cast down from heaven [199, p. 117]. These myths deal with the defeat and deposition of the Great Goddess. In another new version of the myth, the underworld god was defeated not by the heaven goddess, but by the heaven god.

In an ancient Iranian myth, the evil spirit Ahriman, following an unsuccessful battle with Ahuramazda, flung himself, in the form of a dragon, from heaven to earth. It was probably the sight of lightning striking the earth, which led the Neolithic and probably Paleolithic people's imagination to see it as a serpent hurled from heaven. As the fore end of the lightning is its "head," the rear forms the "legs." Perhaps the initial version of the myth was that the mistress of heaven downed her adversary by gripping him by the leg. In any case, such was the outcome of the battle between the heaven god and the lord of the underworld in myths of the second and first millennia B.C. Lightning bends, breaks, twists, hence the detail of the myth that the lord of the underworld, seized

²⁶¹ See chapter "Rain and Heaven."

by the leg when he was felled, went lame.

Various mythologies contain indications that the underworld god was pictured lame. This notion underwent transformations in fairy tales and was reflected in rituals. In a Daghestanian fairy tale a wild man lives in the forest, with an axe blade protruding from his chest (a feature of the Black God); a hunter once fired a shot at him (a later interpretation of the myth about one representative of the underworld hunting another), and the wild man ran away, limping [370, p. 160]. The Adygeians observed an old rite according to which on the 2nd of February (the day when the Near Eastern Black God woke up after hibernation) a lame old man entered the house of a bride (the Black God was a patron of marriage), kindled a fire (an attribute of the Black God) and said a prayer. This old man represented the deity of household prosperity named Sozyresh, who lived beyond the sea; songs referred to him as possessing gold and as a rider. This "benefactor" inflicted diseases on children; he was thanked for crops; the festival in his honor was accompanied by the kindling of fires; God had punished him for some crime by taking away one of his legs [604, pp. 117-128].

When the heaven goddess was replaced by the heaven god, the struggle was waged between the two male gods, heaven and underworld, for world domination. In an archaic Greek myth about the struggle between Zeus and Typhon, the heaven god gained the victory only with great difficulty. In the second half of the first millennium B.C., however, there was no more mention of the struggle: by then the heaven god, now all-powerful, did not require much effort to simply eject the impudent fellow; this is what Zeus did to Hephaestus (though in a different myth, Hephaestus breaks Zeus' head with a hammer). In Christianity, the heaven god became the only god, and the lord of the underworld turned into the devil, so the myth was given a new interpretation: God flung the devil into the underworld as punishment for his arrogance.

Judging by the above reconstruction of the Neolithic myth, the conflict between the heaven goddess and earth god ended unfavorably for the latter. Yet it seems the mistress of heaven received her portion of suffering from her infuriated partner; the notion of rain being the goddess' tears perhaps derives from this. In another explanation of the mechanism of raining, in Slavic tradition, lightning is the serpent sucking rain-milk from clouds-breasts. In Indian legends heavenly cows are milked by spirits of thunderstorm.

At all events, rain was caused by the serpent [683, p. 177]. In China, the winged dragon creates thunder [198, p. 150]. On Neolithic pottery snakes often occur in combination with rain signs (Fig. 124). As already pointed out, black was involved in many peoples' rites of supplication for rain; this can be understood in the light of the belief that the Black God made rain fall. Echoes of the corresponding myth reached faraway Australia, where the similarity of name of the evil spirit Koen (= Cain?) and the deity of thunder, Kohin, suggests that they were initially one.

During the Bronze Age, the former gods acquired the character of negative mythological personages. The underworld serpent became regarded as hiding the waters and delaying rain, and the function of bestowing rain was

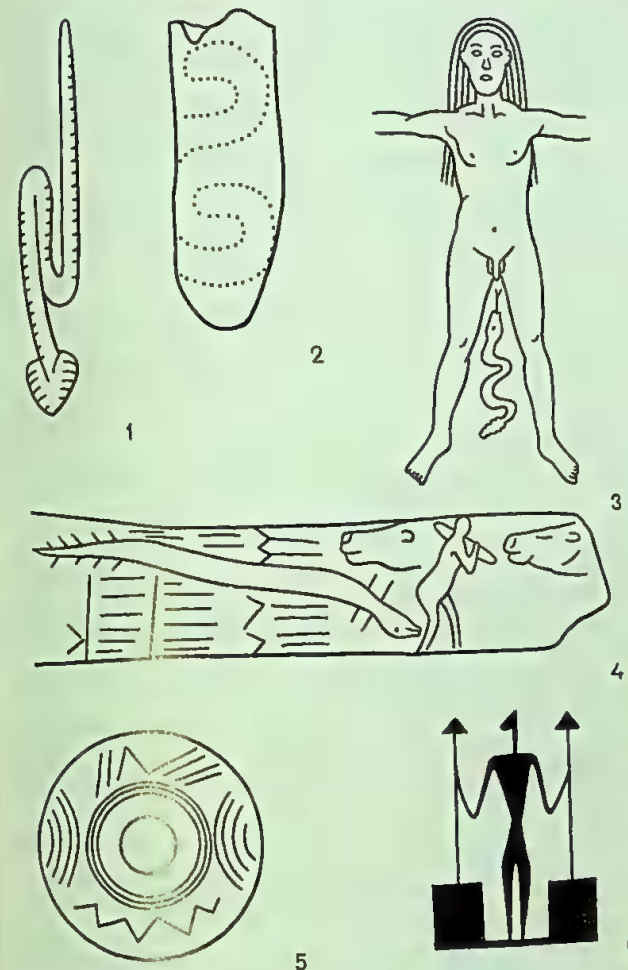


Fig. 382. Serpent as phallus: 1 — Spain, Paleolithic [703, pl. 25]; 2 — Czechoslovakia, Neolithic [696, p. 218]; 3 — pre-Columbian America [656, p. 55]; 4 — France, Paleolithic [753, p. 126]; 5 — Troy [361, p. 152]; 6 — Elam, ca 3000 BC [668, p. 386].

transferred to his adversary. Indra fights the demonic serpent who wraps the sky in dark clouds; Indra milks cloud cows with the help of lightning and sends their milk to earth in the form of rain [40c, p. 487]. The Slavs accounted for drought by the evil action of the serpent locking up the waters [198, p. 116]. Many Indo-European myths represent thunderstorms as battles between a certain deity and the serpent which delays rain; in this battle lightning is no longer the serpent, but rather the weapon directed against him.

Lightning is perceived in European and Caucasian tradition as a "thunder arrow" [198, p. 91] or red-hot spear [21, p. 38]. American Indians represented lightning by a spear or arrow head (Fig. 15: 4). In some Slavic languages (Slovenian, Czech) the same word is used for arrow and lightning. The Ingushes perceive lightning as a "fiery arrow used by angels to strike devils" [12, p. 353]. An arrow therefore figured in anti-snake charms [198, p. 92]. However, in the second millennium B.C. the semantic association between the serpent and the spear or arrow still persisted. According to an Egyptian myth, Isis created the serpent as an arrow [347, p. 89]. Not infrequently, snakes in ancient images have arrow-shaped heads (Figs. 126: 1; 354: 1; 355: 5). The Russian word *strela* ('arrow'), as

well as similar words for arrow in other Slavic languages, contains the root *s.r.r* which is the appellation for bull, i.e., the earth god. The Scythian word *arsa* meaning 'bear' and 'man, male' is consonant with the Scythian *arsiti* ('spear'). In some mythologies the arrow is a symbol of the moon deity [730a, p. 129], i.e., the earth god. The Sumerian *tir* means 'arrow' and 'life' [509, p. 232]; this paradoxical semantics is due to the fact that the underworld god, whose attributes included the arrow, was at the same time perceived as the source of life. The Greek underworld god Hades was represented holding a spear [758, p. 235]. In medieval Europe the "holy spear" was in some cases more venerated than the "holy cross" [864, p. 105].

Identification of the snake with the spear and association between the spear and the earth god existed, very probably, in pre-Neolithic times. In the Lascaux Cave, known for particularly fine examples of Paleolithic art and having been probably a Paleolithic sanctuary, there is a well in which a spear was found; this can be understood as a desire to place the symbol of the god dwelling in the subterranean sphere closer to the earth's interior.²⁶²

A Paleolithic drawing depicts a snake with an odd un-snake-like head (Fig. 382: 1); this is a prototype of the snake with an arrow-shaped head. This Paleolithic representation also seems to be an interpretation of the phallic head. The images of the serpent and the phallus were mutually associated [850, p. 188] (Fig. 382: 2, 3) (this is why the vishap in Armenian fairy tales assumes a vertical position upon awakening). For this reason, the arrow became a symbol of love on the one hand, and, on the other, the phallic properties of sexuality and fertility were attributed to the snake. Hence the belief that childbirth depends on snakes [671, p. 167]. Since lightning was a serpent, the serpent's ability to impregnate was transmitted to lightning.

Accordingly, the arrow and the spear became phallic symbols, which is reflected in the mythology and rituals of many peoples [371b, pp. 75, 76]. In a rite for ensuring fertility and propagation, a man and a woman were connected by a spear [292, p. 409]. The association of the arrow and spear with the phallus can be seen from the cult games mentioned above, which consisted in piercing a ring with a spear or shooting a disk. This association is attested to by linguistic data. The German *Pfeil* ('arrow') and *Pfeiler* ('pillar') are related to the Latin *pallus* meaning both 'pillar' and 'phallus.'

The Greek god of love was armed with bow and arrows. An expression in ancient Indian texts says: "The arrow of love, which is terrible, I am taking to pierce your heart" [526, p. 36]. The arrow also symbolized illness, for the Black God, like the Great Goddess, was the cause of death and disease.

V. Propp, in line with his idea of the "historical roots" of myths, accounts for the identification of serpent and

²⁶² Apparently for the same reason, floors in pagan sanctuaries of mountainous Ingushetia lie below ground level. In Daghestan there are Muslim prayer-chambers built half underground. In English churches before the Norman conquest, the altar section of the church was several steps below the level which accommodated the congregation. Jews mourning sit on the floor or on low benches, and the dead are laid on the floor, obviously expressing proximity to the source of mourning.

phallus by assuming that the phallus symbolized the progenitor, while the serpent was a totemic ancestor [439, p. 255]. However, the notion of the serpent's erotic connotations existed all over the world. Does this mean that the serpent was a totemic ancestor for all peoples? There are no facts to corroborate this assumption. Besides, in terms of "historical roots," what could have been the reason for this universality?

The notion of the serpent as a bearer of sexuality and an incarnation of male fertility remained consistent for thousands of years, despite the absence of any real physical foundation. Many peoples have legends about a sexual relationship between a woman and a serpent, and fairy tales abound in mythical serpents seducing or abducting maidens [671, p. 165]; even in a Vietnamese myth a woman engages in intercourse with a serpent. The motif already existed in the Paleolithic (Fig. 382: 4). During the Neolithic, a snake or a square — an earth sign — were drawn on the belly of female figurines (Fig. 158), apparently expressing the idea of the Great Goddess being impregnated by the Black God. A Greek myth relates that Zeus, wishing to seduce Persephone, disguised himself as a serpent. In an Ingushian myth, the serpent seduced the sun's daughter. As one can see, the tempter serpent is a replica of earlier traditions. The ancient idea of the serpent personifying male sexual potential led to the notion common in medieval Europe of the devil's sexuality.

The phallic cult of the ancient population of Asia Minor, information on which can be derived from classical sources (it is in fact the cult of the Black God) did not have any influence on the religion of ancient Indo-Europeans. Some of its traces, however, were preserved in popular rites. The Russian Easter cake represents the phallus shape (the icing on top of it may signify ejected sperm).

The phallic cult was the veneration of the deity of the earth, who not only bestowed fertility, but was the father of mankind. Hence the myth about the creation of man from earth. Hence also the expression of a medieval Russian author: "The devil created man, and God put a soul into him," for the devil is the Christian version of the earth god.

In ancient times the finger was associated with the phallus [723, p. 4], usually not any finger, but the thumb. In medieval Western European mysticism, the thumb or the "finger of Heracles" was a phallic symbol [730a, p. 568]. In the Old Russian, the word *palec* (now 'finger') designated 'thumb' [493, p. 15, 16].²⁶³ There can be no doubt that the Russian *palec* and the Greek *phallos* are etymologically related.²⁶⁴ The Sanskrit *aṅgusta* for 'thumb' and *aṅgul* for 'finger' may be compared to words already mentioned in connection with the image of the Black God, such as the Latin *anguis* ('snake'), *angustus* ('fear'), and the ethnonym *Angle*. In the Tajik language the thumb is called *nar-angust*, which means 'male-finger.' The raised

²⁶³ The extended index finger symbolizes the presence of divine spirit in Christian tradition. The wedding ring is supposed to be put on the index finger during the wedding ceremony. Apparently, not only the thumb, but also the index finger was associated with the divine phallus.

²⁶⁴ Historically, *palec* must be their root.

thumb designated the erect phallus and could therefore signify approval, also life. That is why the raised thumb in refereeing gladiator combats in Ancient Rome meant "let him live," while the lowered thumb meant "let him die."

If the raised thumb signified the erect phallus, one can suggest the following hypothesis on the origin of shaking hands. Hemingway writes of a hand-shaking version that he noted in a remote African region. One party clasps the raised thumb of the other and shakes it, either as fraternization or a goodwill wish. It must be assumed that we have here an archaic, perhaps the original, handshake. It imitated the sexual act, ensuring fertility and family ties. This is probably why it is considered improper for a man to be the first to offer his hand to a woman. Religiously observant Jewish men and women do not shake hands between sexes. It is an English custom to wish long life to a bereaved person while shaking hands with him.

The comparison between the phallus and a rhinoceros horn belongs in a series of analogies emerging in primitive thinking on the basis of a certain external similarity, such as that of the phallus to the serpent, arrow, thumb, and stick. The popular belief that an extract of powdered rhinoceros horn cures impotence is based on this idea. The belief is still current, with the result that the African rhinoceros, hunted for wonder-working drugs, has been almost exterminated.

If the phallus was an attribute of the Black God, it is likely that circumcision emerged as a symbolic or deceptive sacrifice to the deity. Australian aborigines used the removed foreskin as a fetish in praying for rain [558, p. 79]; this clearly shows that the ritual of circumcision was connected with the deity causing rain.

That the rite of circumcision is very archaic is confirmed by the fact that the Hebrews and other ancient peoples reckoned that it should be performed with a stone knife. Once having emerged, most probably during the Paleolithic, the custom became quite common in the course of thousands of years. It was followed by different peoples in different parts of the world — by Egyptians, African Blacks, Australian aborigines, and American Indians.

The hygienic value of the ritual is often referred to as a rationalistic substantiation of circumcision. But were hygienic considerations less important for Europe and Asia than for Africa, Australia, and America? There was an ancient Eastern Mediterranean custom of offering the male organ in sacrifice to the god or goddess. Such offerings must have been common during the Paleolithic. Somebody, however, contrived to deceive the awesome deity or to satisfy his thirst for blood to some extent by offering only the foreskin instead of the whole penis. The Book of Exodus informs us that Yahweh wanted to put the son of Moses to death because he had not been circumcised, but changed His mind after the circumcision was performed. This echoes the notion that circumcision was an offering intended to appease the deity. Children were circumcised to ensure their future prosperity. The Muslim custom of performing the ritual on boys reaching puberty may indicate that it was connected with initiation.

In Oceania the hut in which circumcision was performed during initiation was shaped like a huge serpent. V. Propp explains this in the following way: "In order to identify with a totemic animal and thus join the totemic sequence,

one had to be eaten by the animal" [439, p. 208]. But, to begin with, this does not explain the meaning of circumcision and, secondly, if boys in Phoenicia were sacrificed to Baal by being thrown into the mouth of an idol with a fire inside, was this, too, "identifying with the totem"?

The rite of circumcision is a "lesser sacrifice" to the awesome god offered to pacify him and avoid worse hardships. Customs like making cuts and burns on the body and piercing the ears or nostrils had a similar significance (the ring in one's ear or nose indicates that in this case "lesser blood" was offered as a sacrifice to the heaven goddess). In many tribes the initiation seems to be a mystery play of symbolic killing. For example, a youth enters a hut where hidden tribesmen make a terrible noise (which is believed to be produced by the devil himself), those outside the hut are shown the bloodied tip of a spear, members of the household express deep grief, as if for a death; then it is announced that the one "killed by the devil" is born anew [447, p. 26].

Torture during the initiation ceremony should not be interpreted as testing or developing courage in future men, but as a propitiating tribute to a deity. Torture was inflicted not only during initiation, but also at festivals dedicated to the deity, and at funerals. According to authenticated evidence, torture carried out during funerals was meant to ensure that the deceased would not take the funeral participants away with him [819, p. 115]; this is an obvious reinterpretation of an older idea that the god who took one person could take others as well, and it was, therefore, desirable to appease him with a "lesser sacrifice." The snake-shaped hut in which the ritual of initiation was performed represented deceptive sacrifice: as if the serpent had already eaten the boys and would now leave them alone. Another example of deceptive sacrifice to the Black God: in some American Indian tribes, a girl must lie in a pit ("grave") during the initiation ritual [819, p. 70].

The image of the serpent is a characteristic manifestation of the Black God. This god was pictured as a serpent not because, or not primarily because, the snake is a vicious, ruthless creature. On the contrary, in popular beliefs the snake often possesses beneficent qualities. Reptiles, in general, such as the snake, grass snake, frog, lizard, and crocodile, were all creatures that personified the lower universe, i.e., earth and terrestrial waters, in ancient conceptions.²⁶⁵

One of these creatures was the tortoise. In China, for example, it is a symbol of the earth. The roots of this conception go back to remote times. A stone sculpture of a tortoise dated to the 37th millennium B.C. was found in Siberia; this object was an earth fetish [287, pp. 41-57; 535, p. 33]. The earth was imaged as a tortoise in ancient cosmological myths. The tortoise's head, like the snake's, was sometimes made phallus-shaped; the tortoise itself symbolized the male principle [287, p. 67]. This indicates that the notion of earth was associated with the male principle as far back as the Aurignacian period, i.e., in earliest human history. The Siberian tortoise is one of the finds attesting that throughout the zone of

²⁶⁵ This is probably why in Jewish custom reptiles and amphibians are prohibited as food.



Fig. 383. Cult representations of goat: 1 — Mycenae, ca 2000 BC [696, p. 79]; 2 — Central Asia, ca 100 CE [361, p. 142]; 3 — Daghestan, rock wall painting near settlement of Chinakhita [256, p. 15]; 4 — France, Paleolithic [703, pl. 87].

Paleolithic cultures, from Western Europe to Siberia, there were uniform religious beliefs, in which earth was male and heaven female.

The significance of the tortoise's association with the earth god was transmitted to the Neolithic. When the early farmer religion was suppressed with the collapse of the Neolithic cultures, the old god retained only one of his previous functions: to serve as an incarnation of evil. An author who insists on a rationalistic interpretation of myths and traditions cannot comprehend why the harmless tortoise merited such hostile treatment in Egypt [251, p. 25].²⁶⁶ The Russian saying, "to make a fine sight of someone, as God did to the tortoise," apparently originates in the myth that the heaven god defeated the earth demon, and the notion that the tortoise represents the earth.

The serpent was the most universal personification of the Black God, incarnating his principal features. The deity was also personified by the bull, which has already been discussed. The same god could also be represented by other creatures. It is not clear what caused this diversity of images of the same deity, but it seems it was the same deity they represented.

Some ancient graphemes from different periods and different geographic areas represent a goat with a plant growing out of its body (Fig. 383: 1, 2). The meaning of this picture can be figured out if one assumes that the he-goat personified the earth. As a matter of fact, the cult-mythological image of the goat reveals certain characteristics of the Black God.

The animal came to be associated with this deity apparently because of its unbridled sexual drive, and also owing to its beard. Western Semites had a deity called Ašima which was venerated in the image of a goat [411, p. 365].²⁶⁷ The Samaritans believed that the world was created by the he-goat god. The Egyptians, who venerated goats and avoided using their flesh for food, were angry with the Jews for sacrificing goats to God. In a popular Daghestanian tradition, people once worshiped the goat as a god [370, p. 162].

²⁶⁶ Names of the tortoise, as well as of the frog, were taboo and were replaced by euphemisms in the distant past. A taboo on animals dangerous to man, such as the bear and the snake, can be accounted for in terms of everyday human experience. But how explain a taboo on harmless creatures like the frog and the tortoise?

²⁶⁷ This name can be compared to the Avestan *ašmano* ('sky') and Sanskrit *asman* ('stone'). Apparently, the root of the Hebrew word *šmān* ('he-goat') is *šm* ('man'). Another Hebrew word for 'he-goat' — *ged* — can be compared to similar words for 'snake' or 'earth.'

The Daghestanians and Adygeians associated the male goat with fertility; this was reflected in tales and rites [604, p. 73]. There is a connection in Slavic folklore between the goat and fertility of the land. B. Rybakov offers an explanation for this by suggesting that domestication of the goat and the beginnings of agriculture coincided in time [475, p. 156]. But how can one then account for the fact that the he-goat symbolized lightning and was associated with funeral rites [371a, p. 664; 604, p. 72]?

According to the Rig-Veda, a horse and a goat were sacrificed to the World Tree [193, p. 116]; these animals here apparently symbolize the "upper" and "lower" universe respectively. It was believed in Lithuania that the goat was capable of foretelling weather [693, p. 45]; this is understandable, for the Black God caused wind, thunderstorms, and rain. In Ancient Rome women were lashed with goat-skin straps to make them happy in marriage. Satyrs (half-men, half-goats) in Greek mythology pursued women. Greek authors wrote about sacred goats in Egypt copulating with women [639, p. 75].

In Figure 383: 3, reproducing a fragment from a Daghestanian rock wall picture, a woman with pronounced sexual characteristics is attacked by a goat. V. M. Kotovich, who published this design, believes that this goat is a totem [256, p. 37], though she herself points out: "One can hardly expect to find the slightest echo of totemic notions in folklore material in Daghestan" [370, p. 21].

In Daghestan and the Caucasus in general, no trace of totemism has been found. Nor has it been detected in Europe or Western Asia, with whose cultures the Caucasus is connected. There are therefore no grounds for extrapolating the corresponding ethnographic evidence collected in Australia and America onto this region. Some authors tend to assume that totemism is a religious universal; it is alleged to have "existed in all cultures of the world" [251, p. 29]. However, this has not been demonstrated. The declaration is myth, and myth, as is well known, does not resort to argumentation.

The female figure in the design in question has three extensions in the form of strokes on the lower part of her body. V. M. Kotovich holds that they designate legs and a tail. This is probably correct, but the strokes are all identical, and are in all likelihood a sign of the goddess' triple nature (cf. Fig. 305). If this figure represents the Great Goddess, the goat next to her must personify the Black God.

Traditions usually display a negative attitude to the goat. When Mongols offer their guest a lamb, it is a gesture of respect, but a goat is an insult. The lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ, whereas the goat is the devil's image. A Russian saying goes: "God created the sheep, and the devil — the goat." S. Tokarev offers the following explanation: "It is possible that one of the main reasons for the goat's bad reputation was simply the pugnacious, stubborn, and wicked nature of the animal" [521, p. 58]. The actual reason, however, is different. The goat represented the deity of a rejected religion, a deity who had turned into an "evil force." The expression, "God created the sheep," seems to arise from an ancient notion that the goddess gives birth to the ram which symbolizes vegetation. The goat and the sheep were associated with different deities,

one of which acquired negative and the other positive significance. The Hittites, for example, dedicated the goat to Telepinus who was associated with the underworld god, and the sheep to the sun goddess.

It was believed in Daghestan and Central Asia that the shaitan (the devil) takes the guise of a goat [104, p. 118]. A German tale attributes the creation of the goat to the devil, and in Russia there was a saying that the devil created the goat in his own image [40a, p. 715]. The devil in the image of a goat is a classical medieval Christian motif. Satan appears at assemblages of witches as a black goat, and witches do him honor.

The Neolithic farmers' religion influenced the beliefs of later peoples — Sumerians, Semites, ancient Egyptians, and in part more distant peoples in Africa, the Far East, Australia, Oceania, and the Americas. The Black God of the Semites, as well as of the Indo-Europeans, became a fiend in religious and mythological conceptions. To the ancient Jews the goat personified the evil spirit Azazel, who, according to the story of Enoch, taught men the art of warfare and women lechery. But in the second millennium B.C. it was still remembered that the evil spirit was also a god. Two identical goats were chosen from the herd and offered as a sacrifice to two gods, Yahweh and Azazel; lots were drawn to decide which of the animals should be offered to which god.

The name Azazel does not originate in Hebrew etymology. The particle *-el* is clear: it stands for 'god.' The second *-z-* seems to be there for euphony. And Aza is apparently a name for the serpent, as already discussed, which is still used in Polish: *jazé (waz)*. Consequently, Aza(z)el means 'serpent-god.'

The mythicized dog image also points to its association with the Black God.

The Abkhazians prayed to a "patron of dogs" during a festival held at the end of February, i.e., at the time coinciding with Shrovetide/Carnival, the feast which, as we have already seen, is connected with the cult of the earth god. The Abkhazian *ala* ('dog') coincides with the Georgian *ali* ('fire'). The dog is associated with fire in other peoples' myths as well [240, p. 243].

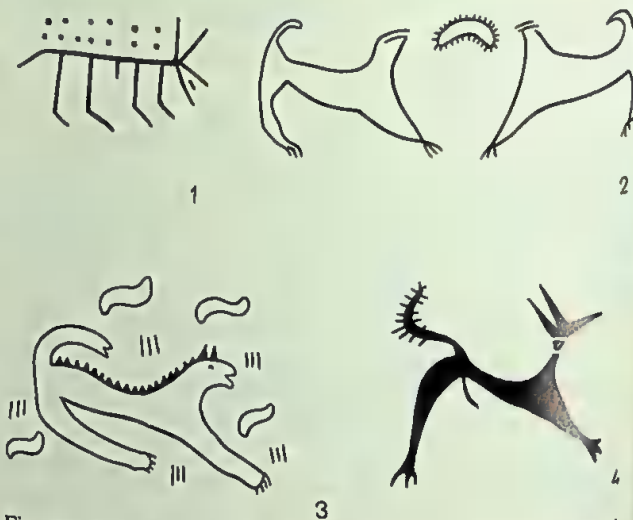


Fig. 384. Cult representations of dog: 1 — Troy [827, pl. 29]; 2 — Rumania and Moldavia, ca 3000 BC [696, pp. 169, 170].

In a picture from the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture (Fig. 384: 3) the dog is surrounded by signs of rain, i.e., it can appear in the same contexts as the serpent (Fig. 124: 2). The heavenly dog of the Mayas was associated with lightning and rain [241, pp. 3, 8]. Possibly this was also the meaning of the winged dog often encountered in ancient Iranian art. K. Trever has attempted to prove that the Iranian winged dog and the bird-herald Simurg of Iranian and Ossetian myths [277, p. 69] are the same creature [529]. However, this opinion is not sufficiently supported. It is much more likely that the winged dog parallels the winged serpent and the winged horse.

Dogs have flipper-like paws in images of the Tripolye-Cucuteni and Koban cultures. This peculiar water dog apparently reflects the fact that the dog was associated with the earth god, who was at the same time lord of terrestrial waters. A Zoroastrian text reads that when a dog dies, its soul enters a stream of water [448, p. 28]; springs were associated, we recall, with the snake creeping out of the ground. A dog statue was unearthed in Lebanon, considered by local inhabitants to be an image of a deity bearing the same name as a nearby river [411, p. 368].

According to an ancient Greek legend, the dog produced the vine [240, p. 242]. This odd motif makes sense in the light of the notion that the dog is a "creature of the earth." Figure 384: 1, an image from Troy, shows a mythical dog (cf. Fig. 62: 7); the dots above it may have the same meaning as the plant in the goat's case (Fig. 383: 1, 2). The dog with dots can be understood as a symbolic representation of a field under crops.

The relation between the dog and the Black God may be due to the fact that the dog puts its tongue out like a snake and also because it bays at the moon (Fig. 384: 2). V. Miller believed that popular imagination saw a dog's mouth with sharp fangs in the new moon and that the celestial dog honored in the image of the moon belonged to the sun god who rested at night, leaving his devoted sentinel to guard his possessions [362, pp. 9, 15]. But this is not the point. The images of the dog and the moon were associated because both represented the same deity, the Black God.

As a representative of the god who was the lord of the world of the dead, the dog had chthonic significance. The demonic three-headed dog Cerberus guarded the entrance to Hades. In Ancient Greece, representations of the dog, like the snake and horse, decorated gravestones [241, p. 248]. The peoples of Siberia, China, and Southeastern Asia considered the dog a guide of the souls of the dead to the next world [85, p. 101]. Female mythological personages associated with the underworld, Hecate of the Greeks and Helle of the Teutons, were represented accompanied by demonic dogs. In Sparta a dog was sacrificed to the god of warfare. There was a belief in Europe that the souls of the dead were incarnated in dogs. In China, there was a cult of a special breed of dog considered to be an embodiment of the deity. Numerous myths tell how a certain hero or people originated from a dog, and there was a widespread idea that a people originated from the liaison between the first woman and a dog.

In Christian notions, the dog, together with the serpent, were devilish creatures [354, p. 7]. The Germans called the

devil "the hellish dog" [40a, p. 13]. The Greeks also fancied the devil in the dog image [758, p. 237].

The Egyptians venerated the dog under the names of various gods of chthonic significance [251, p. 23]. Commonly, the dog was considered the animal of Seth, who had a number of features characteristic of the Black God. Cult representations of the dog were painted black in Ancient Egypt. M. Korostovtsev, reporting this fact, accounts for it in the following bizarre manner: as if the divine dog was represented black because the animal of that color was rare in Egypt [251, p. 23]. In Ukrainian popular beliefs, the devil could appear as a black dog [521, p. 57]; does this mean that black dogs are rare in the Ukraine?

The four sons of Horus personified the four directions of the world; the one who personified the north had the head of a dog (the earth god, as shown above, was associated with the north, as well as the west).

All over Europe, both ancient and contemporary, as well as in the Caucasus, including Daghestan, the dog was attributed the capacity of predicting death; it was believed that the dog bayed when someone was going to die [104, p. 118; 240, p. 259]. The dog was ascribed the gift not only of foretelling death, but also of general prophesy. W. Klinger, the author of a book on animal superstitions, reports that African Blacks believe that in order to see spirits one must apply a liquid extracted from the eyes of a dog to one's own eyes, and that in Hawaii, a sorcerer priest ate the flesh of a sacrificial dog in order to find out who had inflicted a disease on a patient. In Klinger's view, the Russian expression "to eat the dog" (meaning 'to have at one's finger-tips' or 'to know inside out') derives from such a rite which must have been common in ancient times [240, p. 260].

Both ancient and contemporary Greeks believed that the demonic dog swallowed the souls of the dead [758, p. 236]. Some ancient peoples kept special dogs which were given bodies of the dead to eat. This undoubtedly reflected the belief that the deceased belonged to the Black God (or to the Great Goddess; dead bodies were also fed to birds).

Giving corpses to dogs or birds to eat and killing off old people were both sacrificial offerings to the gods, the desire to satiate bloodthirsty deities, so that they would not look for new victims. Had old people been killed for purely practical considerations (to get rid of the burden), it would not have been necessary to eat them ritually. Some scholars interpret the savage custom of putting to death and eating old people in apologetic tones: these habits were allegedly prompted by a desire "to preserve the soul of the venerable aged for the tribe" [448, p. 25].

The dog was venerated in Ancient Egypt to such an extent that killing it was punishable by death. Turkic tribes idolized the dog, some of their legendary personages traced their origin back to the dog, sometimes a Red Dog, their rulers took the title Dog [509, pp. 265-268]. At the same time, the attitude that the dog is contemptible is also widespread. Thanks to its qualities, the dog was the first animal domesticated by man. It has served and helped man since ancient times. The dog is exceptionally devoted to man. Yet calling someone a dog is an insult. How can one explain this in terms of a positivistic interpretation of odd customs? The unfavorable attitude to the dog arises from

superstitions and myths, rather than the actual traits of the animal or its role in human affairs. V. Zhelvis, author of an article on this subject, advances two explanations for ambivalent attitudes to the dog [174, pp. 135-143]: 1) comparison with a dog is insulting because although it is "almost ■ intelligent as man," it often behaves most improperly; 2) changes in attitude to the dog allegedly followed the chain of notions "holy—sacred—forbidden—dangerous—unclean—obscene." The reader can judge the credibility of these explanations. It is much more likely that ambivalence towards creatures representing the god and goddess of the Neolithic religion, the wolf, swan, snake, dog, etc., was due to ambivalence towards the deities they represented.

There is no definite word for 'dog' in the Nostratic language, apparently because the language pertains to the Mesolithic period, when man first started domesticating the animal which later became the dog. Nevertheless, it must have been at that remote time when the dog's predecessor became associated with the Black God. This is indicated by the fact that the Nostratic **kūjna*, which was used for the ancestor of the dog [210a, p. 361], is similar to the proto-Slavic **kūje*, which meant not only 'stick' [199, p. 120], but also 'phallus.' The Hebrew *kelev* ('dog') may have derived from **kūjna*. Kalev was ■ ancient Hebrew name. There is a community (a group of settlements) in Daghestan, whose ancient name was *Keleb*. *Kalvis* means 'smith' in Lithuanian.

Another Nostratic word from which the appellation for the dog derived in some languages is **luka* ('small predator') [210b, p. 24]. Hence, for example, the Channian (Georgia) *lak* ('dog'). A Daghestanian ethnic group calls itself *lak*. The Georgians refer to Daghestanians as *lek*. The Greek geographer Strabo mentions the *leg* people on the territory of contemporary Daghestan. One of the names of the pre-Greek population of Greece and Asia Minor is *leleg*, where *le* is the indication of plural. The Latvian *luoks* and the Russian *luk* for 'bent, arch' may be etymologically related to this series of words. Hence, probably, the euphemistic name for the devil in Russian, *lukavyy* (Evil One), literally 'sly, arch.'

The root-word *lk* could have been one of the Black God's names. This is also evidenced by the Proto-Indo-European **lak(h)* for 'red,' **ulka* for 'wolf' (if **ulka* does not derive from *v.l.k*), **loksna* for 'moon' [108, p. 536], the Latin *lux* for 'light,' and Lithuanian *loky's* for 'bear.' Does *lk* derive from the name of the god ? with the formant -*k*?

The wolf belongs with the Black God, probably not only because it resembles the dog, but primarily because it possesses the pronounced features of a predator and matches the bloodthirsty god. While the dog is a representative of the underworld god, the wolf is his embodiment.

The Proto-Indo-European word for 'wolf' is reconstructed as **ulka*. According to T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov, the initial *v-* in words for 'wolf' came later [108, p. 493]. Yet this prefix is very common. In addition to Slavic languages, it occurs in the Germanic (*wulf*), Baltic (Lithuanian *vilkas* for 'wolf,' Velnias — the name of ■ malicious deity), Iranian (Scythian *varca*, Sackian *birgga* for 'wolf') and even in non-Indo-European languages (Turkic *bürü*,

börü, *pür* for 'wolf'). The Turkic paradigms pose a question: do the Indo-European words for 'wolf' go back to the root-word *v.l/b.r* with the suffix *k/g*?

The image of the wolf played a cult role as far back as the Paleolithic, judging by ritual burials or exposures of wolf skulls pertaining to that period [508, pp. 158, 169]. Indications of wolf mythization are found even among Neanderthals [707, p. 53]. There is a representation of a syncretic animal among Paleolithic pictures — a bear with the head of ■ wolf and the tail of a bison [760, p. 71]. It seems that even in the beliefs of the Early Stone Age there was a deity imagined as the bear, the wolf, and the bull. In ancient Germanic complex names, lexemes with connotations of 'wolf' and 'bear' occur joined (*Wulf-bero*, *Ber-ulf*, and the like).

In European variants of the holy triad, wolves figure as the goddess' twins instead of lions or leopards ■ in Western Asia (Fig. 355: 1). The Capitoline she-wolf appears as the nurse (or mother) of twins. Some myths interchange the serpent and the wolf [200, p. 142; 434, p. 278]. In Slavic fairy tales the serpent is sometimes replaced by the "fiery wolf" [198, p. 125]. Teutonic myths offer ■ story of how the wolf swallowed the sun [829b, p. 565], while in other Indo-European legends this was the dragon's doing. In Greek folk tales the dead turn into snakes, and in a Russian fairy tale the deceased turns into ■ wolf. ■ The Scandinavian goddess of death, *Hela*, was a "sister of the wolf and the snake" [40c, p. 16]. The mythological image of the wolf, like that of the snake, was dual: it was ominous and foretold death, yet at the same time it was considered a good omen to encounter a wolf [240, p. 238]. The image of the wolf had chthonic connotations. Hades was represented with ■ headgear in the form of a wolf head; apparently in archaic conceptions he had a wolf head. Ancient Egyptians believed that Osiris could take on the appearance of ■ wolf [240, p. 218]. The Illyrian *daunus* ('wolf') is etymologically related to the Iranian *danu*, *don* ('river'). The Ossetian *Wörgon*, the name of the smith god, has the root *wörg* ('wolf'), and the smith god was the god of the underworld (*Vulcanus*, *Hephaestus*, and others). The demon of storms in Iranian mythology has the appearance of ■ wolf [730b, p. 909]. Some European peoples referred to December, when the earth god was seen off to hibernation, as the "wolf month." The word *volkolak* ('werewolf') in a medieval Czech manuscript is identified with the name of Faunus [40c, p. 529], who is the same as the Greek *Satyr*. It was believed since early Christianity and up to the nineteenth century that the wolf personified the devil [662, p. 69]. An Albanian fairy tale attributed the creation of the wolf to the devil [40a, p. 742]. According to a Croatian belief, the fern would blossom when the sun defeated the black wolf personifying evil [501, p. 45].

In Ossetian epics, the progenitor of the legendary *Nart* people was a wolf to whom twins were born; this is analo-

²⁶⁸ V. Propp accounts for this as "a return to the totemic ancestor" [439, p. 64]. If one accepts this explanation, it could appear that the Russians and the American Indians had a common totemic ancestor, for the Indians, too, associated the wolf with the world of the dead [371a, p. 242]. V. Ivanov, likewise, found no better explanation for the cult of the wolf than totemism [195, p. 57].

gous to the Roman myth of Romulus and Remus. The coincidence cannot be accounted for by blood relations between the Ossets and ancient Romans, or by the no less fabulous theory according to which identical absurdities arise in different minds at certain stages of social evolution. The two traditions, Ossetian and Roman, are relics of the Neolithic myth about the twins whose parents were the heaven goddess and the earth god.

There are Slav tales about a certain lord of wolves. "The role of the wolf shepherd in Belorussia is ascribed to the mythical lord of forests, *Polisun*, pictured in people's imagination as hairy and with goat legs" [40c, p. 529]. The notion of the goat-legged wolf shepherd was also shared by other peoples: *Faunus* in Italy was of the same nature [541, p. 324].

The attitude to the wolf as a supernatural creature is worldwide. The Hittites saw it as an incarnation of sacral qualities. The wolf was omniscient in Slavo-Baltic tradition [108, p. 493]. American Indians call the wolf "brother," and in India, fables are told about children raised by wolves (the source is obviously the same as the myth about the she-wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus). The wolf is a particularly venerated animal among the Japanese, although the qualities attributed to the divine wolf do not match those of real wolves: the divine wolf is regarded as a mountain spirit, ■ patron of crops, the lord of winds, a healer of illness.

The wolf was venerated in the Caucasus, too. "The wolf is the most lyrical beast in the eyes of mountain dwellers," wrote P. Uslar, a nineteenth century ethnographer [539, p. 82]. The respect in which the wolf was held was not due to its courage, adroitness, and strength, as some authors maintain, but because it personified a deity. The Chechenes believed that meeting a wolf was a good sign [567, p. 188]; the Slavs had a similar belief [521, p. 47]. Nevertheless, people were advised not to look for encounters with the representative of the awesome deity. That is what the Ukrainian proverb "Speak of the wolf (or English — devil) and the wolf's in the house," means. The word for "wolf" was taboo in Daghestan [104, p. 121]. Ancient Romans thought it better not to mention the wolf. The same applies to superstitions in modern Europe [240, pp. 230, 240]. The Belorussians avoided mentioning the wolf on Christmas eve, lest it come out of the forest. It ■ of interest that the word *kolyadnik* (Christmas carol singer) was ■ euphemism for 'wolf' [521, p. 46] (it has been shown in this study that Christmas carol singers are the Black God's suite).

"The Fiend," i.e., "enemy" refers to the devil. But the present meaning of the Russian word *vrag* ('enemy') is secondary; it was initially a name for the Black God. M. Fasmer compares the Slavic *vrag* to the Lithuanian *varges* ('misfortune') and Old Prussian *wargs* ('villain'). He considers comparison to the Old Icelandic *vargr* ('wolf, villain') unreliable [543a, p. 352]. Other linguists find grounds for classifying the Slavic *vrag* as related to the Germanic *warg* ('werewolf') [690].

The Celtic Druid priests worshiped a deity in the image of a wolf [354, p. 27]. The Romans referred to the Celts as *volcae*, probably because of their worship of the wolf. Ethnonyms such as *Volokh* ('Rumanian'), *Wloch* ('Italian' in Polish), *Varyag* ('Varangian'), and *Frank* seem to be

derivatives of the word which was once an appellation for the wolf. It is possible that the Germanic *volk*, *folk* for 'people' was once an ethnonym originating from the name of a deity in the image of a wolf.

The wolf was venerated in Ancient Greece, especially in the somewhat remote province of Arcadia; the Greeks attributed to the Arcadians the ability to transform themselves into wolves. In Greek beliefs the wolf was a chthonic animal; it helped in finding treasure and was pictured as a guardian of hidden wealth. In Lycia, an ancient country of Asia Minor, *Lykeos*, a wolf-god, was worshiped; the country was apparently named after him. Humans were sacrificed on Mount *Lykeos* in Greece until the second century C.E. There was an Arcadian legend about *Lykaon* who was transformed into a wolf [225, pp. 218-225]. The name of the wolf-deity is recorded in the name *Lykos* which belongs to several personages in the mythologized history of Greece, and is a component of names such as *Lykourgos*, *Lykophrones*, *Lykomeses*. The root *lyk* is quite common in Greek toponymy. The Greek name *Lukas*, so similar to the word for 'wolf,' means 'light.' The ruler and the high priest of the federation of Etruscan cities bore the title *lucumon*. In an ancient Roman city, the demon representing the abode of the dead, pictured black, wearing ■ wolf's hide, was annually offered the most beautiful girl as a sacrifice [662, p. 69]; his name was *Lykas*.

The name of *Loki*, ■ Scandinavian demon of fire and thunderstorm, is undoubtedly connected with the name of the wolf-god *Lykeos*, *Lykaon*, *Lykas*; incidentally, there is ■ Greek name *Louki*. It was ■ custom in Norway to throw the skin formed on boiled milk into the fire, as though to *Loki* [829b, p. 549]; this is understandable, for snakes are fond of milk. *Loki* was sometimes imaged ■ a fish. He was connected with the underworld; he had a mysterious house high in the mountains, or kept the key to ■ certain prison (the underworld god owned a castle where he kept his daughter in captivity). Traditions describe *Loki* as dangerous, evil, sly. At the same time, he was a butt of ridicule, like *Hephaestus* and *Priapus*, the Greek versions of the deposed Black God. *Loki* was worshiped as a god in ancient times; he was supplicated for good weather [672, p. 187]. G. Cox compares the name *Loki* and words expressing the notion 'to glow' [653, p. 172]. E. Meletinsky finds the comparison between the name *Loki* and the Norwegian *logi* ('fire') linguistically unjustified, but remarks that the Scandinavian spirit of fire was named *Lokki* [371b, p. 68].

According to the Edda, *Loki* was *Odin's* brother. This notion must be due to the circumstance that both derive from the same prototype. The English *Odin*, Icelandic *Othinn*, Saxon *Wodan*, or German *Wotan* was the Teutons' supreme god, "ruler of the world." Like *Loki*, he could assume the appearance of a serpent. His wife was triple. He was called "master of the mountain," and many mountains are named after him. His other titles are "bestower of rain" and "lord of the spear." He was offered humans put to death by hanging. He had a prophetic gift, seemed to be an incarnation of both wisdom and base insidiousness, was a patron of crops and seafaring, a god of combat and lord of the dead, and led the fantastic "wild hunt"; ravens and wolves were at his service. All these characteristics suggest

that Odin/Wotan was the former Neolithic earth god. This also follows from his name, which may be associated with words for 'fire,' for example, the Welsh *odyn* and Western Slavic *vatra*.

The name Odin or Wotan can also be compared with the Indo-European appellation for water — *v.d.* Incidentally, *unn* can adduce here one of the numerous examples of pre-Columbian connections between the Old and New Worlds: an Indian tribe, the Cendal of Mexico, has preserved the name Wotan for a legendary white man who once reached their shore from overseas [59, p. 95].

There is evidence that the Black God was represented in Western Asia by feline predators — the leopard, lion, and tiger. The reason, apparently, was that these animals personified the god's ferocious nature. In Early Paleolithic Asia Minor the Great Goddess' children were represented as leopards (Fig. 357: 1-3), probably because their father was a leopard-god. Judging by pictorial representations, the leopard's skin was there worn during cult ceremonies. An ancient Egyptian picture shows a priest wearing a leopard's skin [28, p. 138]. The leopard skin was also most likely worn as a symbol of virility: a corresponding idea is probably reflected in Shota Rustaveli's "Knight in the Leopard Skin". Cult representations of the leopard were made in pre-Columbian America. In China, the tiger represented the god of the west [756, p. X]. Words like the Hittite *parš* ('leopard'), Persian *pārs*, *fārs* ('panther'), ancient Turkic *bārs* ('tiger'), Lakian (Daghestan) *barç* and Chechenian *borz* ('wolf') obviously derive from the Black God's name **b.r.*

To the Hebrews the lion was an image of a sacred creature called Ariel ('lion-god'). In Greek myths the lion represents the forces of darkness. The lion of the Hittites represented the moon god [679, p. 91]. An ancient Egyptian god, Aker, was pictured as a lion. Nergal, the spouse of the Babylonian "queen of shadows," was imagined as a lion. The ancient Greek chimera combined parts of typical incarnations of the underworld god: the snake, the goat and the lion. Excavations of a Scythian burial mound in Moldavia revealed a gold object in the shape of a snake with two lion heads. Christian tradition sometimes pictures the lord of the underworld as a lion [240, pp. 278, 279]. European fairy tales sometimes depict the lion as a guardian of hidden treasure [240, p. 283]. The winged lion (the sphinx) in Ancient Egypt had the same origin as the Assyrian winged bull, Iranian winged dog, Greek and Caucasian winged horse, and winged serpent in Russia and America: these are all images of the Black God who can rise to the sky. The lion represented a highly honored deity, hence its popularity in heraldry and folk art, even in countries where lions were never found, like Russia, England, Japan and Daghestan.

Certain linguistic data also point to a connection between the lion and the Black God. In the Ossetian language, *dombáy* means both 'lion' and 'aurochs' [108, p. 521]. V. Ivanov believes that the Slavic *luty* ('fierce, ferocious') derives from **leu* ('lion') [108, p. 510] (more likely both words come from one of the names for the Black God **l.i.*Ala+t*). The Indo-European and Semitic words for 'lion,' *leu* and *lab*, are considered related to the Egyptian *rw* [162, №3, p. 14] which resembles the name of the

Egyptian Ra. In the mythology of Classical Antiquity, which is relatively recent, the lion is associated with the sun; however, this idea is secondary, to the same extent as Ra becoming a sun god.

The category of feline predators representing the Black God includes the domestic cat. In Greek folklore, the cat turns into the World Serpent [108, p. 600]. The widespread name for the cat *k.t* may be related to the name of the divine serpent *g.d.* There was a superstition that during thunderstorms it was better to take a black cat out of the house, lest it attract lightning. It was also said that a black cat could be born from an egg laid by a rooster [521, p. 58] (let us recall that the mythical serpent hatched from an egg). The devil in popular European beliefs turned into a tomcat, and witches could take the form of cats. In European fairy tales, a black cat with fiery eyes guarded enchanted treasures [240, pp. 265, 267]. In Japanese demonology, the cat is an evil creature possessing supernatural powers. American Indians pictured the devil posing as a cat [371b, p. 11]. Cats were venerated in Ancient Egypt, possibly as representatives of the Black God.

Many features of the Black God were transferred to his adversary; hence the Egyptian myth that the sun god Ra in the image of a cat killed the serpent Apop. The thundergod Perkunas or his adversary turn into a cat in Lithuanian folklore [108, p. 600]. Attitudes to the cat, as to other representatives of the Neolithic god and goddess, are ambivalent: thus, an encounter with a black cat was a bad sign in Russia, but in England it was supposed to bring luck.

The Tripolyans made pig figurines from clay and pressed wheat grains into them; ancient Greeks offered pork mixed with grains to the goddess [696, p. 211]. These data make it possible to suppose that the pig personified no more than the idea of fertility. Other evidence, however, allows us to correct this assumption. In Hittite texts the wild boar is mentioned as an image of the god [371a, p. 233]. The word for 'pig' meant a deity among the Megrelians and Svanians (Georgian ethnic groups) [337, p. 116]. In the Old Icelandic language, the word for wild boar acquired the meaning of 'prince' and 'god.' In Lithuanian myths there are motifs of a wild boar turning into a king or a god [108, pp. 514-517]. All this cannot be accounted for if the hog or the pig merely express the idea of satiety.

The pig was associated with a feast timed for the winter solstice. The Georgians fixed a pig head to a festive pole on New Year's eve. The ancient Romans ate pork during saturnalia held in December. In contemporary Western Europe, pork is traditionally eaten at Christmas and Carnival time; isn't this because the festivals originated from rites marking the retiring and awakening of the Black God?

In Teutonic fairy tales, Freyr rode up to the sky on a hog [40c, pp. 748, 749]. In Russian *bylinas* (epic lays) and fairy tales, the bull, the serpent, and the wild boar are equivalent [40a, p. 781; 198, p. 169]. In Slavic mythology, the wild boar dwells in the sea. In Celtic mythology, the wild boar or pig are associated with the world of the dead [371a, pp. 233, 635]. In Indo-European tradition, the wild boar is of similar significance as the wolf, bear, leopard, and lion.

Of the same configuration as the image of the beneficent mounted god striking the serpent with a spear, there is in ancient Iranian art an image of a rider striking a wild boar. This is not a scene from real life, because nobody hunted hogs or snakes with spears. Corresponding to these pictures are Iranian myths in which the demon in the image of a hog is defeated by a hero.

The name for the pig in Turkic languages, *donuz* or *donguz*, is etymologically related to the Iranian *danu*, *don* ('river, water'). The Indo-European word for the wild boar (the Latin *aper*, Old Teutonic *ebur*, Russian *vepr*) could have been formed in accordance with the schema *v+b.r.*, where **b.r.* is the Black God's name. The Indo-European appellation for pig, in English *swine*, is believed to have originated from **su*, which meant 'produce, give birth to'; yet this meaning could be related to **sus* ('phallus'; this will be discussed later). V. Ivanov maintains that the appellation for the wild boar *v.p.r.* derived from a word which once meant 'phallus' [108, p. 515]. The Sumerian *subura* ('pig') belongs in a group of terms associated with the cult of the earth god.²⁶⁹

In Scandinavian myths the wild boar was Freya's lover [730a, p. 231]. The ancient Persian *ner* ('wild boar') stems from the Nostratic **nayra* ('man, male') [210b, p. 92].²⁷⁰ Why was this particular animal thus referred to? All animal species have males. The point is probably that the word was associated with a deity personifying virility, namely, with the Black God. The proto-Sardian **nura* means 'a heap of stones on a grave,' the Phoenician *nur* means 'fire.'

In Ancient Egypt, the serpent, the dog, the tortoise, and a black pig were dedicated to the underworld god Seth [639, p. 82]. The Egyptians sacrificed the pig to Seth, to Osiris, and to the moon [767, p. 53]; all this is understandable, since Osiris personified vegetation, and the moon was a mythical bull which personified earth.

Ancient Egyptian beliefs were influenced by the ambivalence toward the Neolithic deities, which was characteristic of that period. As the snake was idolized and at the same time was believed to be an incarnation of the power hostile to the gods, so the pig was considered sacred and at the same time impure. An ancient Egyptian text says: "The pig is an aversion for Horus" [347, p. 119]. The Egyptians partaking of sacrificial pork did not customarily eat pork in everyday life. As reported by Strabo, the inhabitants of Asia Minor did not eat pork and did not admit pigs to their towns [557, p. 22]. The devil was not infrequently represented as a pig in Christian Europe; there, too, the notion once existed that the pig was connected with the "evil force."

Why don't Jews and Muslims eat pork? It is allegedly because there were cases of food poisoning from pork in a hot climate. But why were Jews forbidden to eat the flesh of the hare? Scholars seeking rationalistic substantiation of traditional beliefs have nothing to say here. Why didn't the Somalians, Kenyans, and Ainu eat eggs, why didn't the inhabitants of the Canary Islands eat fish? If pork was

²⁶⁹ See chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net."

²⁷⁰ The name for Urartu, Nairi, apparently originated from the word **nayra* as an epithet for the Black God.

taboo because of the danger of food poisoning, why did the ancient Egyptians use it as ritual food, while among the Vedda in Ceylon it could be eaten by everybody except shamans?

Not all the peoples of Europe and Western Asia saw the pig as so impure that its flesh could not be eaten, yet all of them considered the pig an image of the Black God hostile to the god of light. In the Near East and Ancient Greece the pig was a personification of evil triumphing over the sun in winter [40a, p. 787; 173, p. 12].

The illustrious god of the Indo-Europeans adopted quite a few features of his enemy, the Neolithic Black God. That is why the pig was sometimes pictured as an animal associated with the sun god. Ancient Teutons sacrificed a hog to the sun, and then feasted on it [489b, p. 18].

As already mentioned, the donkey was among the animals dedicated to the Black God, and again the attitude to it, as to everything originally associated with the deities of the Neolithic religion, was ambivalent. In Ancient Egypt it was an animal of Seth, i.e., of the underworld serpent; at the same time the donkey engaged in fights with Apop, who is also the underworld serpent. Christian theologians connected the donkey now with Jesus Christ, now with the devil [232, p. 37].

Because the donkey has long ears, the harmless hare was also on the list of animals representing the awesome underworld god. According to Plutarch the Jews did not eat the hare because they saw its resemblance to the donkey. An ancient Egyptian picture of "Horus Killing Seth" shows Seth as a hare. In an American Indian myth, the hare pursues the sun and aims an arrow at it. In another Indian myth the hare catches the sun in a trap [790, p. 46]. In some ancient Mexican pictures the hare is combined with the moon. Ancient Greeks believed that hare flesh had aphrodisiac properties [225, p. 237]. Ancient Balts held the hare to be sacred, while in medieval England it was believed to be linked with the "evil force." Myths of North American Indians relate that the hare led people out of the underground world. The Greek *lagos* for 'hare' may be related to *lykos* ('wolf').

Some birds were associated with the Black God. For example, birds of prey of the hawk family, the eagle, the hawk, and the kite, were the earth god's winged representatives. The eagle symbolized Zeus who will be shown in the following chapter to have been originally the heavenly form of the underworld god. Many peoples have legends in which the eagle is associated with fire and produces lightning. The Germans fastened the body of a kite to their houses as a safeguard against lightning [240, pp. 81, 285]. Nswr of the ancient Egyptians was a moon god in the image of an eagle. *Lunak* is the Czech word for 'hawk'; an appellation for the moon is the root of this word. The Russian *korsun* ('kite') may be compared to toponyms and mythological names already discussed, such as Kars (capital of medieval Armenia), Korsun (an island in the Dnieper River), Corsica, Chersonese, Horsk, Hor. The ancients regarded the eagle as guiding the souls of the deceased to the world of the dead, as a prophetic bird and a bearer of wisdom. It was believed that the eagle could be a healer, that it placed magic stones in its nest. The notion of the eagle as connected with the deity who

in the course of time became a demon, the Evil One, is reflected in various beliefs. The ancient Hebrews saw the eagle as unclean; the Yakuts, who generally honored the eagle, saw its appearance as a bad omen [240, pp. 50, 78].

The raven also represented the underworld god, perhaps because of its black color and because it is carnivorous. The raven is assigned the qualities as the eagle in some Indo-European traditions. The Black Raven of Georgian fairy tales possessed treasures which it would bestow on whom it pleased. According to one belief, souls of murderers are implanted in ravens. In Europe the raven was considered a companion of the "evil force"; in Africa it is referred to as the "evil spirit." The raven is the "devil's bird" in England, yet it is treated with respect: men doff their hats on seeing a raven, children are not allowed to destroy crows' nests, and when a raven alights on a roof of a house, it is believed to bring prosperity to the household. The raven is credited with qualities of the underworld god: longevity, wisdom, a capacity for presaging (mis)fortunes, and healing power. As a representative of the deity ensuring conception, the raven figured in wedding rites. Fairy tales sometimes associate the raven with fire [240, pp. 83-86, 285].

Eskimo myths featuring the raven are of interest. There are two ravens, the Old one, identified with the moon, who created the world and caused the Flood, and the Young one, who created humans and gave man fire, having stolen it from the abode of the Old Raven (after performing these deeds, the Young Raven turned into a deer). Like other mythological images whose prototype was the Black God, the raven in Eskimo legends is sometimes a comic personage. Moreover, the Eskimo word for 'raven' is *iel* [349, pp. 4-10].

The rooster was also associated with the underworld god. Ancient myths may have contained an episode in which a rooster alarmed the sleeping lord of the underworld when the sun maiden was abducted. Among some peoples there was a custom of walking through fields with a rooster held in the hands before the spring plowing. In English, "cock" is a vulgar word for 'penis'.

The rooster was a chthonic bird in ancient traditions. At the same time it was dedicated to Aesculapius, the Greco-Roman god of medicine. It was credited with the capacity to forebode misfortune. A medieval Czech chronicle reports a custom of going to a spring and strangling a black rooster there, while calling out the devil's name [371b, p. 310]. There was a Russian custom of sacrificing a black rooster to the water spirit by burying it in the ground. Some Jews still sacrifice a rooster annually as a peace offering. The Slavs sacrificed a rooster, preferably black, when laying the foundation of a house. In China, a red rooster is painted on a house as a talisman against fire; a Russian euphemism for 'fire' is "red rooster." Various peoples crowned their rooftops with representations of an animal they linked with the earth god, for example, a horse, bull, or snake; the rooster was one such. Hence the custom of putting up a spire with a representation of the rooster on the roof. In medieval Western Europe, a rooster could crown a church building, instead of a cross [730a, p. 386], since both the cross and the rooster symbolized the earth god.

It was pointed out in the chapter "The Tree of Life" that some trees were associated with the earth god. Among them was the oak, probably because the shape of the acorn recalled the phallus. The Druids regarded the oak as a sacred tree; the Druid is believed to derive from the Celtic for 'oak', *deru* or *derw* [865, p. 3]. The oak was sacred to the ancient Hebrews [411, pp. 177, 178]; it was customary to bury the dead under an oak. As a result of a change in beliefs and a transfer of images from the early farmer religion to the antagonistic Indo-European, the oak was alternately associated with the thundergod and his adversary: the oak tree was dedicated to Perun/Perkunas, Indra, Zeus, and so on. In accordance with some legends, a serpent pursued by a serpent fighter hides beneath an oak tree. Russian and Indonesian tales speak of a magic tree growing "in the sea-ocean" [857, p. 79]; this tree is an oak, at the roots of which there is an egg.

Linguistic evidence also points to an association of the oak with the image of the earth god. The Proto-Indo-European **per*, *perk* meant 'oak' and 'cliff' (rock and cliff were associated with the earth god). The word is the root of the thundergod's names Perun and Perkunas. **Per*, *perk* seem to stem from the initial root *b.r.* with or without the suffix *-k*. Another Proto-Indo-European appellation for 'oak', **oru*, has the root *r* which, as shown above, pertained to the Black God.

Judging by allusions in superstitions and the early written sources of different peoples, the forest, especially when very dense, was associated with the Black God. The Russian *bor* ('coniferous forest') comprises the root *b.r.* The etymological connection between the words for forest and oak, on the one hand, and mountain and cliff, on the other, is due to the fact that the notions expressed by both sequences of words were associated with the Black God.²⁷¹

The apple tree was also associated with the earth god. In V. Ivanov's opinion, it was mythicized because intoxicating beverages were produced from apples [108, p. 643]. In various mythologies, the apple is a symbol of fertility, health, knowledge, wisdom, love, lust, and also of death and evil; besides, it has a phallic connotation [730a, pp. 112]. The *Song of Songs* says, "I raised thee up under the apple tree²⁷²; there thy mother brought thee forth." These words express an archaic notion that conception and birth are associated with the apple tree. In a Lithuanian legend the apple tree has nine branches, and the goddess conceived by eating an apple. Paris had to award the most beautiful of the three goddesses the prize an apple. Heracles plucked an apple which was supposed to return youth to its possessor. In an Armenian fairy tale, a formidable monster, *vishap*, guards a magic tree on which "apples of immortality grow." In a Georgian fairy tale, *dav* dwells underground and subsists on apples. In Russia, it is customary to place

²⁷¹ V. Ivanov believes that this etymological connection is due to the Proto-Indo-European habitat, a region of wooded mountains [108, p. 615, 666]: in his opinion, the name of the weather god is associated with the appellation for the oak tree because lightning strikes oak trees (oak trees alone?) on mountaintops (only on mountaintops?).

²⁷² The implied meaning is that woman arouses desire in man.

an apple on a grave. The Proto-Indo-European word for apple, **ablu*, was, V. Ivanov believes, assimilated from an older Near Eastern substratum [108, p. 441]; it comprises the root-word *b.l.b.r.*

The cornel and the cherry tree were apparently also associated with the Black God. This assumption is prompted by their names, comprising the stem *k.r.*, one of the Black God's names (the Greek *kranos* and the Latin *cornus* for 'cornel', the Lithuanian *kirnis* for the 'god of cherries'). Their mythicization must be due to their color, red.

Apart from trees, some other plants were also associated with the Black God. These include, in particular, bitter or pungent roots, such as garlic. Hence, by the way, the belief still current that garlic is helpful in cases of impotence. The ancient Greeks and Romans ate large quantities of garlic in the hope of extending their lives and acquiring extra energy. Among the Jews in olden days garlic used to be an indispensable part of the Sabbath meal.

Potatoes were called "devil's apples" in Europe. They had a bad reputation, and people refused to eat them. In their country of origin, Peru, potatoes were called *papas*; as will be shown below, that was one of the names of the Black God. Another Peruvian name for potatoes was *kumara*. This word is composed of the Black God's name Ku, known, in particular, to South American Indians, and the goddess' name Mara; the potato, then, must be their child.

Flowers, as fruits of the earth, were evidently associated with the cult of the earth deity. In Ancient Greece, a bull adorned with flowers was driven in procession during festivals; in Ancient Egypt it was a ram. The custom of bringing flowers to a funeral seems to stem from the fact that they were associated with the deity of the underworld. The notions of flowers and death were apparently interrelated as early as the Neanderthal man period: in Iraq, in the Shanidar Cave, Early Paleolithic remains of nine persons were discovered, apparently killed when the cave roof collapsed; investigators believe that a funeral feast with flowers was held there [707, p. 54].

Grapes belong among the remarkable fruits of the earth. They are used in producing wine, which was considered a divine beverage. There is an expression in Hittite texts, "to drink god," meaning "to drink wine." It was obligatory to drink wine during the feast dedicated to Dionysus, a Greek deity who combines characteristics of the Neolithic earth god and the spirit of vegetation. In Christianity, wine symbolizes Christ's blood. In some parts of Russia the grape vine was glorified at Christmas [440, p. 37]. This must be regarded as a distant echo of southern conceptions associating wine with the earth god: the vine does not grow in Russia and wines were unknown there in ancient times. The Russian expression "to see the green serpent," which means "to drink oneself blind," is based on mythicization of the connection between the serpent and drinking alcohol. The earth god bestowed health, so the custom originated of drinking wine "to one's health."

Grape wine is a ritual beverage in Judaism. It is ritually drunk at weddings, religious festivals, and on Saturday (the sick and children drink grape juice or a decoction of raisins). At the same time the Bible is antagonistic to wine and the grape; they were forbidden to those who dedicated

their lives to serving God. This is probably why Islam adopted, or perhaps simply legalized the already effective prohibition on wine drinking: after all, wine symbolized the impure god. The Indo-European and Semitic names for 'wine' comprise the root *v.n.*, which, as noted, may have derived from *v.r.b.r.* (cf. *venok* 'wreath', *Venus*, etc.).

In Ancient India, a special intoxicating drink referred to as "divine" in the Rig-Veda was prepared for rituals dedicated to Soma, the god of the moon. A Khevsur (Georgian ethnic group) girl offers her companion a bottle of vodka which she doesn't drink. The Khevsurs also provided their dead with a bottle of vodka. A traveler who visited North Ossetia in the last century reported that a bottle stood at the head of the dead body in local tombs [151, p. 259]. Pancakes and vodka were left on graves by the Russians after funeral repasts. The Lithuanians poured beer when praying to God for rich crops [40c, p. 146]. Adygean priests poured an intoxicating drink on the head of the sacrificial animal [604, p. 51]. The Philistines sprinkled newborn babies with wine.

There is no doubt that wine was dedicated to the Black God not only because it was produced from the fruit of the earth, but also because of its effect. It seemed to people that drink gave them strength and courage issuing from the god. Excitement, including erotic desire, induced by wine was also considered as proceeding from the god, for it was characteristic of his temper. Finally, intoxicating drink led to merry-making, and the Black God was the god of merriment, as follows from ancient rites and written evidence.

It was once the custom to put old people to death to the accompaniment of laughter. Until quite recently, it was usual in Sardinia to laugh after a funeral. Students have pointed out that ritual laughter was often associated with mourning among different peoples [7, p. 49]. One was supposed to laugh during the mock funerals which were part of Christmastide plays in Russia. The Australians aborigines observe a ritual involving fire, accompanied by deliberate laughter. In an Australian myth, "laughing youths" live in rocks or come from the west [7, pp. 47, 48].

Laughter was acceptable to the Black God. Obviously this was not happy, but rather malicious laughter. The Iranian name for the mythical serpent Dahaka means 'maliciously laughing.' The custom of ostentatious laughter during the Easter holidays, still extant in some places in Europe, is connected with the notion that the Black God was fond of laughter. Easter laughter definitely had ritual significance; even ministers did their best to make their congregation laugh during the sermon [228b, p. 240]. Shintoism and Zen-Buddhism preserve elements of ritual laughter. Ostentatious laughter was typical of Russian laughter. Apparently a survival of pagan rites. Christianity, which set itself against paganism, disapproved of laughter and merriment, not only out of ascetic principles, but also because laughter and merriment were still associated with pagan rites.

²⁷³ In Old Russian, a *yurodivy* was a religious escapist and to a certain extent a clown, "God's fool".



Fig. 385. Ear of grain representations: 1, 2 — carved stones in Tsugni and Somoda, Daghestan; 3 — Russia [490, p. 88]; 4 — Ancient Crete [298, p. 77]; 5 — Ancient Iran [100, p. 590]; 6 — Ossetia [22, p. 57].

Bread, the principal staple food in ancient times, was considered an offspring of the lord of the earth. The spirit of bread was imagined as the wolf, dog, cat, goat, bull, horse, or pig [558, pp. 162-176], all animals associated with the Black God. An ear of grain was a symbol of the Black God (or of his creation, the spirit of vegetation). The cereal ear figures in ornaments of the Neolithic and later periods; it is encountered in Daghestanian decorative art (Fig. 385). The sign had symbolic meaning as far back as the Paleolithic [703, Table 84], although then it must have been a general designation of plant life. It is of interest that in the Paleolithic design referred to here, the sign occurs on a leg of a female figure, i.e., where earth symbols were depicted later, during the Neolithic.

In Greece, during the annual celebration of the symbolic marriage of the heaven god Zeus and the earth goddess Demeter, it was an essential part of the ritual to carry out an ear of grain, considered a fruit of the marriage [347, p.

49]. In some languages an etymological connection exists between the words for 'standing crop' and 'child' [778b, p. 512].

A sheaf of cereal grass was among the attributes of the Christmas holiday in Russia [310, p. 28]; this had nothing to do with the crops, for it was winter, but was relevant to the god to whom the festival was dedicated. The Hurrian underworld demon was honored as a patron of grain. Ancient Slavs strewed the dead with grains or threw seed into the grave; sometimes the deceased was buried in a grain storage pit. These customs can be accounted for by the fact that cereals were associated with the chthonic deity. During the West European Carnival (the earth god's feast) people pelted each other with nuts and flour (attributes of the earth god). The Russians had a special whole grain ritual meal; it was prepared for funeral repasts, weddings, and celebrations of births, i.e., during events favored by the Black God.

Unleavened dry bread is the Jewish Passover food; in ancient times it was ritual bread in general; the Scriptures read that the Deity should be given only unleavened bread as an offering. It is considered that Jews eat unleavened bread during the Passover holidays in commemoration of the fact that their ancestors in the Exodus from Egypt were in such a hurry that they took unleavened dough with them. This, however, does not conform to what the Torah says: before the Exodus, God told the Jews to hold a ritual feast during which a sacrificial lamb and unleavened bread were to be eaten. It is possible that unleavened bread, being more archaic than yeast bread, took on ritual qualities for the same reason as stone knives were used for ritual purposes long after metal knives became common.

The English word "baker" is a euphemism for 'devil.' There is a German expression "The wolf sits in the wheat field" and "Don't go to the wheat field, there's a big dog there" [228b, p. 6]. Christmas mummers smear their faces with soot in order to identify with the Black God; in some fairy tales and ethnographically recorded customs, smearing the face with soot and dirt, and the ban on washing are associated with the cultivation of grain [501, p. 119].

In the chapter "Sunrise and Sunset" we gave examples of a particular earth sign on a strip dividing an oval, and forming with it an O-shaped emblem (Fig. 53); the ear of grain was a symbol pertaining to the earth god, and it could therefore have the same significance (Fig. 386: 5).

In Daghestan, as well as in other regions of the Caucasus and in Western Asia, herringbone stone laying is often seen (Fig. 386: 1). The stones were slanted in alternate directions from row to row. One might think that the herringbone pattern was an architectural device prompted by structural device. Other data, however, suggest that this masonry pattern may have a different, symbolic origin: this technique of stone laying could initially have been a way of incorporating a sacred symbol in a building wall. A similar pattern can be seen in ornamental art (Fig. 386: 2, 3), including ornaments in places where the above stonelaying technique was not known. It is called herringbone, yet it seems more likely that it is a symbol of a grain, rather than a fish.

The scoop used in baking bread is also a symbol of the

Black God. Its representation is encountered in Daghestan (Fig. 386: 4) and in rock wall paintings of Northern Italy [619, pp. 92, 165, 204]. As an oven accessory, the scoop could be associated not only with bread, but also with fire. The Ingushes had the following custom: before a funeral repast, the mother led her children around the hearth, gave them the iron shovel used for gathering embers to kiss, drew a cross on the cinders, and said: "May God make you as strong and sound as iron" [599, p. 13]. The Black God was the bestower of strength, health, fertility; cows were therefore stroked with an oven scoop on the first day out to pasture.

Since the oven scoop was associated with the Black God, it was taken out of the house during thunderstorms in Europe and in the Caucasus [565, p. 115, 116], apparently so as not to attract the angry god's attention. The same reasoning obviously lay behind a popular belief in medieval Europe, among the Slavs, and also in Ancient Greece, that fire should be extinguished during a thunderstorm lest it attract lightning.

The Indo-Europeans associated the thunderstorm with beneficent deities.²⁷⁴ Neolithic farmers, however, believed that thunderstorms were produced by the earth god ascending to the heavens. Perhaps thunder was perceived as the sound of a supernatural hammer striking on the firmament (myths relate that the heavens were forged by a deity). The Russian words *molot* ('hammer') and *molniya* ('lightning') are etymologically related, and the Old Icelandic word *möllnir* ('lightning') originally meant 'hammer.' These words seem to have originated from *v.l.*, which was a common name for the Black God (the word-building pattern *mol+ot* is of the same type as the Old Russian *vol+ot* for 'giant'). To the Etruscans hammer symbolized death; the Etruscan Haru, the demon guiding the dead to the underworld, was armed with a hammer. In a German myth, a magic hammer called Hammar stayed within the earth, but rose to the sky once every eight years [653, p. 48]. The hammer was considered an accessory of the devil in medieval Europe. At the same time, the T-shape, a schematic representation of the hammer, was in Christian emblems equivalent to the cross. "In remote antiquity the cross was an emblem of the thunder hammer," writes A. Afanasiev [40c, p. 134]. There was a belief in Germany that one could summon an evil spirit by striking a forge hammer at midnight. The Teutons made land ownership legal by casting a hammer [40a, p. 254], obviously because the Black God was the lord of the earth.

The axe was called *pelekys* in Ancient Greece and *pilakku* in Akkad and Babylonia. These words can be compared to the Russian *palka* ('stick') and Greek *phallos*. There are Neolithic depictions of a stone axe and of a male figure holding one. In Scandinavia, excavations of a Neolithic settlement unearthed a sanctuary with traces of ritual fires; buried in the floor was an axe with the blade turned upwards. Five snakes are depicted on a menhir in Spain; excavation revealed five stone axes with their blades upwards at the foot of the menhir [760, pp. 170, 186]. A belief is still extant in Europe that a stone axe kept in the house is protection against lightning. The thundergod

holding a stone axe figures even in Vietnamese mythology, and the Mayan god of rain and lightning was called Chak, which means 'hammer' [371b, p. 624].

During the Bronze Age the stone axe, which in fact looked more like a hammer than an axe, evolved into a real axe with a blade. The metal axe was therefore associated with rudimentary notions of the Black God: a Chechenian legend tells about a mythical "king of beasts" with a huge hammer; the Lithuanians buried an axe in graves until the nineteenth century.

The Russian *topor*, the Iranian *tapar*, *teber* ('axe') derived from an ancient word for 'metal'; hence the Turkic *temir* for 'iron' and the Sumerian *zabar* for 'copper.' The word must have existed long before people started manufacturing metal objects; metal formations as well as rocks found in the ground were associated with the earth god. The Hebrew words for copper, snake, and fortune telling have the common root.

It was believed in Russia that lightning does not strike smithies [565, p. 117]. The reason is clear: the smithy, the abode of hammer and fire, is close to the Black God's heart, so why should he destroy it? The divine smith in myths is also a builder, musician, healer, and always a sorcerer. Smiths were honored, feared, and at the same time disliked as sorcerers; this was not because they possessed useful skills, but because the Black God was believed to be a smith. The devil in fairy tales figures as a smith. The ancient Semitic thundergod Hadad was a smith pictured with a hammer in his hand. The Hittite smith-god Hassamil dwelt in the underworld, like Hephaestus of the Greeks and Vulcanus of the Romans. The Abkhazians went to the smithy to pray on New Year's eve, timed for the new moon; this rite was called "pig praying" [337, p. 116]. In the language of the Bambara (Africa) the word for 'smithy' is also used for the mythical egg from which the universe emerged. This word, *jan*, is apparently a phonetic variant of the initial root *b.r* (as, for example, the name for the fiery bird Phoenix/Bennu). The lord of the underworld came to be looked upon as a smith because he possessed a hammer, metal, and fire.

Fire could be associated with the Black God for two reasons: people saw fire issuing from the earth's interior, and fire was produced by lightning. Volcanic eruptions were attributed to the action of the lord of the underworld kingdom. This notion is not confined to the Roman god Vulcanus. Strabo reports a Greek belief that the earth shakes and erupts fire when the serpent Typhon turns from side to side in his cave [841, p. 214].²⁷⁵ Seneca writes that a flame erupts from within the earth in Anatolia and it is not only harmless, but even beneficial to vegetation. Let us recollect in this connection the Tripolye and Cretan female figurines which were placed in a fire in a wish to ensure rich crops, thus symbolizing the union between the heaven goddess and the underworld god.

Fire, as already stated, represents the Black God rather than the sun in many rituals and myths. The Vedic Agni, personifying fire, does not belong among the solar deities

²⁷⁵ A striking coincidence: the aborigines of the Fiji Islands also believed that earthquakes were caused by movements of a mythical serpent living in the cave; islanders regarded this serpent as a supreme deity [671, p. 50].

²⁷⁴ They will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

in the Rig-Veda; he was the father of mankind, a patron of marriage, the lord of rites, the bestower of rain, and he dwelt in water. In addition to all this, Agni was a guardian, he knew all paths, was wise and omniscient, gave wealth, encouraged singers. The epithet "ferocious serpent" was applied to him. The number three was associated with him: he had three heads, three tongues, was born in three places and lived three lives. His attributes, such as stone, earth, night, disease, and frog, characterize him. The Rig-Veda applies the words "Agni, the son of waters" to lightning [397, p. 688]. This is the former Black God assimilated by the Aryan religion (which, besides Agni, involves quite a few other pre-Indo-European elements). Similarly to the Vedic Agni, the Greek Apollo exhibited Black God characteristics; with his fiery nature, he became a personification of the sun at a relatively later stage of ancient Greek culture.²⁷⁹

The custom of staying away from work on days dedicated to the Black God and Great Goddess is connected with the cult of these deities. Saturday was one such day. The color black was a symbol of Saturday in Ancient Mesopotamia, showing that the day was associated with the underworld god. Indeed, Saturn and Cronus were deities to whom Saturday was dedicated. In Southeastern Asia, it was the day of the divine serpent Naga [453, p. 89]. The Chechenes called Saturday the "day of wolves" [135, p. 84]. The Romans reserved Saturday for funeral repasts. It was considered lucky in Ireland to die on Friday and be buried on Saturday [730a, p. 611] — for it meant that the deceased was "accepted" by the heaven goddess and the earth god. In the eyes of Christians, pagan veneration of the Black God on Saturday became an assembly of evil spirits; hence the medieval notion of the witches' sabbat (*sabbat* is the corrupted Hebrew *šabbāth*).

Šabbatu in Babylon was not initially a weekly event: it was observed during the full moon period, i.e., when the moon was "in full power." Later *šabbatu* became a day of the week. It was considered unlucky, and followers of the faith did their best not to anger the deity. A Babylonian tablet reads: "The seventh day... Bad day... Meat not to be eaten... Clothes not to be changed... No chariot-riding..." [446, p. 134]. This was obviously a day of submission to the evil power of the god. On this day one was expected not only to deny oneself pleasures, but essential needs; it was also necessary to confess one's sins. There was a notion in ancient times that any action was a sin. Whatever existed was the god's creation, and human actions violated the order established by the god. People had to do some things to satisfy their everyday needs, but they thought it better to abstain from this sin and pray for forgiveness on the day dedicated to the deity. Saturday was originally not a day of rest, but a day of manifest noninterference of man in the world belonging to the gods [684, pp. 241-249].

In Judaism, Saturday is characterized by abstention from all actions which have the character of creation. For example, it is permitted to read, but forbidden to write, a water tap may be turned on, but electric appliances may not, because this connects an electric circuit. The

Jewish Sabbath is the day dedicated to communion with God. The holiness of Sabbath is expressed not only in abstention from work, but from business discussions, daily troubles, and idle talk. The Jewish Sabbath has preserved some features of remote paganism, such as fire, wine, and flowers. It has elements pointing to an association of its rituals not only with the Neolithic Great God, but also with the Great Goddess. For example: in no way should one do anything to a tree, like shake it, climb it, or tie cattle to it; it is forbidden to use a broom or to wring wet hair.

The Russian word *prazdnik* ("festival, holiday") is related to the word *prazdnost* ("idleness"). Staying away from work is an essential feature of a holiday, and since all holidays were religious in ancient times, it is to be concluded that idleness had cult significance. The notion that idleness, i.e., noninterference in the world belonging to a god, was approved by the deity, acquired exaggerated significance in Buddhism, especially in the Zen variety; followers of this religious-philosophic doctrine do nothing throughout the seven days of the week. In another variety of Buddhism, Lamaism, each family must give one of its sons to the monastery, so that he, avoiding work, thus redeems the sins of his kin. Lao-tseism in China also considered idleness sacred.

Of the two major Neolithic deities, western Semites particularly venerated the Black God, whose sacred day was Saturday, while eastern and especially southern Semites gave preference to the Great Goddess who presided over Friday. Hence the Muslim prohibition to work on Fridays, borrowed by Islam from the ancient customs of southern Semites, the Arabs. Sun worshipers devoted the sun god's day, Sunday, to prayer; this custom was assimilated by Christians. In Scandinavia, Thor, the thundergod, was particularly venerated; Thursday was dedicated to him, and people avoided working on that day. In Ossetia, people abstained from work all these four days, in order not to anger the mighty gods.

To conclude this general review of the Black God's characteristics, let us take one rather curious manifestation. Rites dedicated to this deity involve certain actions seemingly meant to mislead somebody for some purpose. During feasts in honor of this deity (now Christmas and Carnival), people wore masks, put on fantastic costumes or other's clothes to render themselves unrecognizable; men might dress as women, and women as men. Fictitious names were assumed. People pretended not to recognize each other, which was taken good-naturedly. These practices probably included All Fools' Day on the 1st of April. The Russians had a belief, now a joke, that a person would surely get rich if he were mistaken for somebody else; since the Black God was the source of wealth, the belief was most probably associated with the cult of this deity.

When the ancient Greeks made sacrificial offerings to Hades, they turned the face aside; this custom is still alive in the sect of devil worshipers. There is evidence that in the eighteenth century Scotland, sacrificial offerings were thrown backwards, over the shoulder [865, p. 151]. When Jews address the Almighty in a certain prayer, they cover their eyes with a hand; the same is done when lighting candles. The high priest in the Jerusalem Temple entered

the Holy of Holies backwards. Excavations of Paleolithic and Neolithic burials often reveal that the face of the deceased is covered with his hands. Judaic and Muslim customs require that the face of the deceased be covered. The face of the dead was covered with a mask in both the Old and New Worlds. American Indians have sacred masks called "false faces" specially for curing diseases [371a, p. 515]. In different languages, words for 'mask' derive from certain names of the Black God, for example the Italian *maschera*, Hebrew *masweh* for 'mask, veil' (from *m.s*), and the French *voile* for 'veil' (from *v.š*). It is not quite clear what this all means. Perhaps it was intended to deceive the evil god? The ancient Semites would blacken their faces so as not to be recognized by the evil spirit. Participants in the Siberian "bear festival" wore masks lest the bear identify those who killed it [730a, p. 189]. It was customary in Russia to disguise oneself as a deceased or to imitate funerals during Christmastide, between Christmas and Epiphany; it is possible that this was also meant to mislead the underworld god and distract his attention away from oneself for the coming year.

Written and folklore evidence has preserved various names of the originally pre-Indo-European deity here referred to as the Black God. It is, however, more difficult to identify certain mythological male personages whose names have reached us, than is the case with the female images of ancient religions, myths, and fairy tales. The point is that the Great Goddess did not have to withstand the stiff competition her partner endured. For reasons unknown to us male deities came to dominate in the third and second millennia B.C. Though they could be somewhat lenient toward the Great Goddess, having demoted her from queen to concubine, such a compromise was impossible where the Black God was concerned. This was why his cult was supplanted, he was held in contempt as an enemy of gods and men, and many of his functions were appropriated by new gods. Also, the image of the Black God split up, his characteristic features were transferred to different images, some of which shrank further, turning into what is now called personages of the "lesser mythology," while others were adapted to new beliefs.

There is no image in the Sumerian pantheon corresponding to the Black God, but some of his individual features can be distinguished in various male deities of Sumerian mythology (An, Enki, Enlil, Ishkur, and Nannar).

There were several gods in Ancient Egypt who can be correlated with the Black God on the basis of their particular characteristics. The presence of several nearly identical deities in a single culture may be accounted for by the circumstance that at an earlier period they were deities of similar type, worshiped by the different tribal groups from which the ancient Egyptian nation was formed.

Seth is a conspicuous figure in ancient Egyptian religion. The epithet "mighty" was applied to him. In the third millennium B.C. he was no less venerated than Horus. A combination of the names Seth and Horus was the pharaoh's title. As the myth goes, Seth fought Horus for domination over Egypt, and ultimately the country was

divided between the two of them. The two halves of Egypt were accordingly symbolized by white and red.

Seth personified the storm and thunder, and he also incarnated belligerence. He was associated with the north and darkness [662, p. 65], venerated in images of the dog, pig, bull [766b, p. 210], crocodile, fish, and snake [767, p. 49], and regarded as a source of metals [766a, p. 23]. His name was designated by the hieroglyph for 'stone.' The Greeks identified Seth with their Typhon.

During the second millennium B.C., when Neolithic gods were turning into evil demons, the attitude towards Seth soured, and he developed into something like the devil. His name was obliterated from inscriptions, his images were destroyed. He was expelled from the list of nine major gods, and replaced by Horus.

Gheb, the "father of snakes" [766b, p. 69], was only a deity of the earth; however, he had the rank of "lord of gods" [347, p. 25].

Yet another Egyptian earth god was Ptah. The legend of Ptah as creator of the world dates back to the fourth millennium B.C.; he was called the father of the great gods, such as Ra and Osiris [347, p. 146]. Ptah was a major Egyptian god in the third millennium B.C. Subsequently, he was assigned the role of underworld lord; he was portrayed as a mummy, i.e., a corpse. The Greeks attributed to him features characteristic of Hephaestus. Like Hephaestus, he was considered a patron of metallurgy, and in the course of time also of crafts and arts in general. The goddess Sohet, who displays aspects of the Neolithic heaven goddess, was his wife.

Seker was one of the archaic Egyptian deities, god of the earth, graves, and night. He was believed to devour dead bodies. A funeral boat with the head of a horned animal at the prow was attributed to him. The falcon was his hieroglyph, and he was represented with a falcon head [639, p. 19]. But the falcon is an image of the heaven god Horus. Are then Seker and Horus two aspects — earthly and heavenly — of the Black God?

One of the oldest Egyptian gods, Min, was represented as a bearded man with an exaggerated sexual organ (characteristics not generally typical of Egyptian gods, but rather of the European and Western Asian Black God). His main function was to bestow fertility, yet he carried a whip, implying that he was considered ferocious; his epithet was "he who raises weapons." The bull was his personification and lightning his emblem. Min was a highly honored deity; the pharaoh himself took part in rites dedicated to him. He was considered a bestower of rain; however, his veneration in Egypt could not have been connected with this function, since crops did not depend on rain in that country, but on the movements of the Nile.

The moon was Min's emblem; his sanctuary was called the "house of the moon." Min or Men was in ancient times the moon god not only in Egypt, but also in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (he was later replaced by Mina, a moon goddess). Manath, whose name implies that she was the wife of Min, was Venus' name in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Undoubtedly related to the name Men, Min is the word for 'moon' or 'month' in some Indo-European languages: Latvian *menes*, Sanskrit *māsas*, and Greek *mens*, *men*; *mes, mens was the Proto-Indo-European form [543b,

²⁷⁹See chapter "The White God."

p. 609].²⁷⁷ The origin of the *d*, *t* in the German *Mond*, *Monat* ('moon, month'), French *mont* ('mountain'), and Latin *montis* ('mountain, stone') is not clear; perhaps, the formant *-t* not only indicated the feminine gender, but was also a possessive suffix in ancient languages of Europe and Western Asia.²⁷⁸

The Egyptians identified Min with the Theban god of warfare Montu [363a, p. 70], whose name may be reconstructed as *m.n.t*. Related to Montu was, in turn, Amon with the *mn* sounds, *m.n*. Coinciding with the name Amon is the ethnonym of an ancient Semitic people, the Ammonites, whose state, Ammon, was situated on the territory of present Jordan (hence the name of the Jordanian capital, Amman). Western Semites called the obelisk, presumably a fetish representing the Black God's phallus, *hamman* [411, p. 228]; is the Teutonic *hammar* ('hammer') related to this word? The Babylonian Many was the deity of fate [411, p. 381]; his female form was Mamituv, similar to the name of the Daghestanian female demon mentioned in the preceding chapter. The deity Mani, "mother of the sun," is also known in Daghestan. Mantuli is the name of a Daghestanian mythical female creature with long red or black hair and a necklace made either of gold or donkey manure; she was a patroness of the home, but could put children to death [370, p. 172]. Aminth was an Etruscan demon who corresponded to the Greek Eros.²⁷⁹ Amentet was the country of the dead in Egyptian mythology.

Amon, Aman, or Hammon was an ancient name for Egypt. Its etymology is usually traced to *am+en* ('life' + 'source', i.e., 'source of life') or to *am+an* ('life' + 'earth') [730a, p. 83]; however, these etymologies seem to be incorrect, for, judging by the large number of analogies, the sounds *m* and *n* of the word in question are parts of an indivisible root.

The name of the Egyptian Min coincides with that of the mythical Cretan king Minos (if the usual Greek ending *-os* is disregarded); it is appropriate in this connection to point out that the legendary Minos owned not only the half-man and half-bull Minotaur, but also the untiring hound and unerring spear. Also, he was one of the judges of the underworld in Greek mythology.

The *mn* Men of a popular god in ancient Asia Minor is similar to the Egyptian Min. The crescent was his emblem. In one picture he has a bull head; in the opinion of E. Golubtsova, this circumstance "emphasizes the agricultural character of the deity" [116, p. 33]. At the same time, Men was a warrior god.

The name of the ancient Indian deity Manu, a progenitor of mankind and, like Minos, a law-giver, is similar to Min, Men. He belonged to the sunset and the underworld [778b, p. 671]. According to Tacitus, Mannus was the progenitor of the Teutons; Manes was the progenitor of the Phrygians.

In Scandinavian mythology, Manes was an anthropo-

²⁷⁷ According to V. Ivanov, these appellations for the moon stem from **meh-s* which he believes to be a derivative of **meh* ('measure of time') [108, p. 684].

²⁷⁸ In the Hattian and Northern Caucasian languages, *-t* is a possessive suffix.

²⁷⁹ The connection between Eros and the Black God is discussed in the chapter "The White God."

morphic personification of the moon, or the coachman of the moon chariot. In Ancient India, Mangu was a beligerent and ferocious god who could nevertheless bestow wealth. In some Turkic languages, *mangu* is both 'ancestor' and 'monster' [370, p. 147]. In Chinese mythology, Man is a huge formidable serpent. Mani, Manito is the name of the supreme deity worshiped by the Indians of South and North America. Mana of the Melanesians is a divine spirit, a supernatural power.

The root *m.n* is found in Latin words semantically associated with the image of the Black God, such as *mineus* ('bright red, scarlet'), *minister* ('assisting, helping'), *mens*, *manes* ('underworld spirits'), *moneta* ('money, mint'). It is found in the Celtic *mina* ('mine, pit') and Greek *mina* (a measure of weight of precious metals). Possibly the Proto-Indo-European names for 'stone' **kamon* and **akmen*, and the Hebrew *'aman*, *'uman* for 'artist, craftsman' evolved from the same *m.n*.

Minus is the Latin name of a Spanish river. The name Min can be heard in the oldest name for Armenia, Armin, known from Akkadian texts of the third millennium B.C. Manna was an ancient state situated in the region of contemporary Kurdistan; its inhabitants, referred to in ancient written sources as Manneans, must have worshiped a god with such a name.

The names Mana, Manu, Manes are etymologically associated with the Proto-Indo-European **manu* ('male, man'). V. Illych-Svitych links the name of the Egyptian Min (Mnw) to the Nostratic **māna* ('man, male') [210b, p. 58]. To designate 'woman' the Nostratic language had a similar word, **minā* (it is worth remarking that in Dravidic languages words stemming from this form mean 'lewd or evil woman' [210b, p. 68]). Among names corresponding to the male deity Min, Men, there is the Roman Minerva, virgin goddess of war, patroness of sciences, arts and crafts, who was preceded by the Etruscan Menrva, represented with attributes usually associated with the Greek Athene. In ancient Egyptian mythology Ment or Menhit was the goddess-lioness.

The Nostratic thesaurus contains a number of other words which sound similar to **māna* and may be semantically associated with the image of the Black God: **muña* ('egg'), **manga* ('strong, robust'), and **magu* ('bad') [210b, pp. 72, 41, 38].

Yet another interesting etymology suggests itself. The Slavic word *muž* is related to the Sanskrit *manus*, *manu* and Avestian *manuš* ('man, husband') [210b, p. 670]. But the Slavic *muž* is almost perfectly consonant with the Hittite *muš* ('snake'), which corresponds to the Sumerian *mš* ('snake'). In the Berberian language, *mš* means 'fire,' which reflects a connection with the "serpent of the depths" and the "fire of the underworld." Since the sun is a part of underground fire, *mš*, pertaining semantically to the underworld deity, has produced names for the sun, such as, for example, the Georgian *mze* ('sun', *-e* being the suffix), and the name of the Mesopotamian sun god Šamaš. The Berberian *mš* and Georgian *mze* are feminine in gender, and the name of the Mesopotamian sun god was previously that of the ancient Semitic sun goddess; this indicates that these terms do in fact reflect the concept of the sun as a part of the underground fire, personified by a maiden

belonging to the underworld god.

The word *mš* provided a name not only for the snake, but also for another animal associated with the mythologized underworld — the mouse. M. Fasmer's *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language* quotes an opinion that the word for 'mouse,' similar in different Indo-European languages and stemming from the Proto-Indo-European **mus*, meant literally 'gray' [543c, p. 28]. It is, however, more likely that the meaning of the word was transposed in the opposite direction, the word for gray deriving from the appellation for mouse; the word being analyzed has much broader connotations than the notions 'gray' and 'mouse' and does not altogether fit into the framework of the Indo-European vocabulary, coming as it does from pre-Indo-European terminology connected with the image of the underworld god. That is why, in particular, the words for 'mouse' and 'muscle, might' are etymologically related in some languages; sometimes they even coincide, as, for example, the Greek *mys*. This again is due to a semantic connection of these words with the image of the god personifying power.

Corresponding to the Russian *moš* is the Old German *mos* ('moss, bog'), the bog being the realm of the Black God. This group of words apparently also includes the Persian *meš* ('ram'), the Russian *meh* ('fur') and *mošči* ('relics of a saint's body'), and the name of the legendary Moses (Mošeh).²⁸⁰

The Armenian name for Mount Ararat is Masis, Masik; according to tradition, it was an abode of snakes and vishaps. *Meza* is the Abkhazian for 'moon.' Mezile in Adygeian mythology is a wood-goblin with an axe-like projection on his chest; his more archaic manifestation was as the god of hunting Mezit-hi or Meset-h [371, p. 132]. Etymologically related to this name seems to be the Turkic *masiga* for 'male, progenitor' [370, p. 147].

As pointed out in the chapter "Snake-Water," the ethnonym Muški of an ancient Asia Minor people indicates that this people once worshiped a deity in the image of a snake, or snake-fish. The Muški or Moski, who inhabited the territory later called Phrygia, moved east in the 13th—12th centuries B.C., having been ousted by the tribes that invaded Asia Minor from the Balkan Peninsula, and in the eighth-sixth centuries B.C. they migrated to the Caucasus; southeastern Georgia was named Meskheta after them, and the ancient capital of Georgia located in the vicinity of Tbilisi was named Mcheta. But even without this people, ethnonyms and toponyms resembling this name are common in the Caucasus. Classical authors reported that a Maskut tribe lived in South Daghestan.

²⁸⁰ It is written in the Bible that the pharaoh's daughter called the infant she found Moses, "for I drew him out of the water," i.e., the name Moses is made to derive from the Hebrew *mošeh* ('draw out, extricate'). However, several questions arise. 1) It is unlikely that an Egyptian would call a child she found by a Hebrew word, even if she saw that the infant was Jewish; besides, how did the princess know the language of the slaves? 2) The pharaoh's daughter found the basket with the baby among reeds, she did not draw or pull it out. 3) The form *mošeh* has the meaning "one who pulls out." On the other hand, the word meaning "one who was pulled out" must have had the form *nimšah*. There is also an opinion that the name Moses derives from the Egyptian *mš*, *mšy* for 'son'; but this word could have originated from the name of the god's son in a corresponding myth.

The Tushines (a Georgian ethnic group) are referred to as Mosok, Musek by the Daghestanians. There is a village called Mesketi in Chechnia and Meçhal in Ingushetia. *Meçhalg* is the Chechenian and Ingushian for 'martlet, swift'; this bird of swift, efficient, and untiring flight was honored by these peoples and also by the Georgians. The oldest reconstructible form of the Georgian ethnonym Meskh/Moskh is considered to be *Mes-k*; similar to it is the Basque ethnonym *Bas-k* [147, p. 153]. These terms include, in all probability, the name for the River Moskva (Moscow), where *-va* is a common suffix in eastern Slavic names for rivers.

As shown in a number of examples pertaining to the Black God, names and terms with the root *m.s* (*p.s*, *b.s*) not infrequently had the affix *-k*, the meaning of which will be discussed later.

Analysis of the term *m.s+k/h* entails inquiry into the origin of the original name for the Easter holidays. In Judaic tradition, the Hebrew *Pesach*, *Pesaḥ* ('Passover') derives from *pasah* ('to pass by'). The Book of Exodus reads that when God intended to strike the Egyptian first-born, He told the Jews to mark their houses, so that He might distinguish them from the Egyptian's houses and pass them by. This episode, a minor detail in the Exodus, could not have furnished the name for the festival dedicated to liberation from slavery. It is significant that the Jews have other names for the holiday, such as "feast of matsoth" (unleavened bread) and "time of our freedom."

The word *Pesaḥ* not only means Passover; it also stands for 'sacrificial lamb.' Perhaps the source of the name for the feast should be sought there. The corresponding passage in the Bible says that God tells the Jews to eat a lamb and unleavened bread. Moses orders, "Slaughter a *pesah*," and the following were the words of God: "This is the ordinance of the *pesah*: There shall no stranger eat thereof... In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof." There is also the instruction that the flesh of the sacrificial lamb may not be boiled, it must be baked over fire, and the internal organs and other remains must be burned. It becomes clear from all this that the *pesah* is an offering of a lamb to the god incarnated in fire. Deuteronomy repeats: "Thou shalt slaughter *pesah* unto the Lord thy God," and then again: "At the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in, there thou shalt slaughter *pesah* at even at the going down of the sun." Then there follows an etymological explanation of the derivation of *pesah* from *pasah*, which is obviously a later interpretation of the term (as is the explanation of the origin of unleavened bread).

A legend known among Western Caucasian Adygeian ethnic groups tells that their ancestors once lived in the country of P-s-hu. There is a small village called Pshu in Abkhazia, situated near a cone-shaped rock which is deemed holy. Custom forbids goat hunting in that area. According to the legend, everything in the mythical "country of Pshu" is made of stone, and a race of giant people once lived there [10, p. 100]. Goats, stone, giants — all once lived there of the notion of the underworld god. It is possible that this locality came to be considered sacred and was named Pshu after the cone-shaped rock associated with the underworld god.

Ancestors of the Abkhazians as well as of other Adygeian ethnic groups came to the Caucasus from the region south of the Caucasus. They must have brought with them the legend of the country Pshu. It was most probably from there that the word reached the pre-Semitic settlers of Canaan, and then, via the Canaanites, the Israelites. The Jewish Passover festival is a commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt. However, living among the Canaanites, and being to a large extent their descendants, the Hebrews assimilated some of the Canaanite elements of the springtime celebration of the resurrection of the son of a god named *p.s.k. They probably also adopted the feast marking exit from underground.²⁸¹

One of the gods borrowed by the Egyptians from Asia Minor has the remarkable name of Bes. There is no doubt that this is a phonetic variant of the form *m.s.* Bes in Egyptian representations has the appearance of a half-beast, with feathers on his head (an attire of eastern Mediterranean tribes in the second millennium B.C.), his tongue protruded, and there was a cross on his chest (the Egyptians began to wear the cross at a later stage in their history). Bes was a god of warfare and murder, drunkenness and sensual love, music and dancing, and also a patron of childbirth [641, p. 285]. The Phoenicians also had a god called Bes. Related to the name Bes seem to be those of the Egyptian sacred bull Apis, and Apsu, the archaic "father of the world" in Babylonia, who dwelt in an abyss.

Bes of the eastern Slavs is the devil. The Egyptian Bes and the Slavic Bes are semantically identical. It is very likely that these words and also the Latin *bestia* ('beast') and the name of a major Norwegian pagan goddess, Bestla, have a common origin. The Egyptians had a goddess called Bast whose name may be reconstructed as *b.s.t.*; she was a patroness of childbirth and of warfare. The name of the Roman Vesta may be of the same origin. V. Ivanov and V. Toporov believe that the Slavic word *bes* ('devil') goes back to *bhoi-dhoas* ('inspiring fear, terror') [371a, p. 169]; yet the Indo-European **bhoi* (the Lithuanian *baisus* for 'frightful, terrible') could, on the contrary, have derived from the name of the deity inspiring fear.

M. Fasmer objects to the comparison of the Slavic *bes* and Latin *bestia* [543a, p. 160]. However, further examination shows some interesting parallels. Resembling *bestia* is the Italian *bastia* ('tower'); similarly, the Ossetian *masig* and Greek *mossin*, which also mean 'tower,' are similar to the ethnonyms *mesekh* and *mosok*, which are connected with the terminology pertaining to the Black God, and the Latin *turris* ('tower') echoes the Black God's name Thor, Tūr. These parallels may be due to the fact that the Black God was regarded as a patron of structures, in particular military ones.

The Slavic *pes* ('dog') may be related to the name Bes. This word is compared to: 1) proto-Slavic **pestra* ('motley')

²⁸¹ Myths of various peoples, in particular the Prometheus story, contain allusions to a very ancient notion that mankind issued from the underworld, i.e., that it was "engendered by the earth." This is also indicated in certain linguistic evidence: the Hebrew words *adam* ('man'), *adamah* ('earth'), *adom* ('red'), *dam* ('blood'), and *damim* ('money') have the same root, while the Proto-Indo-European **dgom* means both 'earth' and 'man.'

and ancient Persian *paša* ('spotted'); 2) Sanskrit *pācu*, Latin *pecus* ('cattle'), Greek *pecos* ('hide, skin'), and Czech *pišeti* ('flow, trickle'). The second group of comparisons points to a connection between *pes* ('dog') and the Black God (cf. the Ukrainian *peklo* for 'hell').

The Greek *daimona* ('demon') is an appellation of the lord of the underworld. An inscription, "He was stolen by Demon," is encountered on ancient Roman gravestones [662, p. 75]. This word can be seen as composed of *dai* and *mona*. The second part is the name of the Black God *m.n* already discussed. The meaning of the first part is not yet clear. We will return to an analysis of words of the type *dai*, which also seem to be related to the Black God.

The image of Osiris, highly honored in Ancient Egypt, is rather complicated. His name is among the most frequently mentioned in *The Pyramid Texts*. He was a brother of Seth who killed him in order to gain domination over Egypt, but he returned to life thanks to Isis.

According to his certain features, Osiris is an earth god. This is indicated by the following text applying to him: "When canals are dug, or temples and houses built, monuments raised, fields cultivated, all this is upon thee, upon thy back" [533, p. 20]. Osiris was represented as a recumbent human figure from which grain grew. He was identified with Seker and Ptah, had the title "the Great Black One," was associated with the moon [385, p. 118], and was considered the lord of the underworld. He was referred to as a god of death. His images were accompanied by gallows; he was offered people put to death by hanging [558, p. 70].

Another aspect of Osiris is that he was the son of the earth god and the heaven goddess. Besides "the Great Black One," Osiris had the title "the Great Green One." He was represented as a man with a green skin, and was referred to as "lord of the vine" and the "soul of bread" [385, p. 121]. He describes himself, "I live like grain, I grow like grain, I am barley" [347, p. 54]. Judging by these characteristics, Osiris was the spirit of vegetation. He was sometimes represented as a ram, i.e., the creature which symbolically personified vegetation, and was identified with the ram-god Amon.

The image of Osiris combined notions of the Neolithic deities of earth and vegetation, who were confused not only in later times, but even during the Neolithic, to judge by numerous examples of graphic symbols. The sign of vegetation in fact often expressed the notion "earth." True, the image of a god dying and rising from the dead does not conform to the awesome and powerful Black God who only falls asleep for the winter.

However, even if the images of Osiris or other deity of the kind were recorded in written sources in their original form, i.e., as they were pictured during prehistoric times, discrepancies could easily occur in the corresponding stories. One cannot expect accuracy or logic in ancient myths. For example, it did not disturb the Egyptians that Osiris was Isis' father, brother, husband, and son, and at the same time a son of their son Horus.

The ancient Greek Dionysus/Bacchus, like the Egyptian Osiris, possessed features both of the earth god and of the vegetation spirit. Feasts in his honor, the Dionysia, corre-

spond to Christmas and Easter. Dionysus was considered a son of Zeus. Epithets bestowed on him characterize him as a personification of the fruits of the earth. On the other hand, he was represented as a bull, and a black he-goat was dedicated to him [558, p. 106]; he was considered a moon deity [671, p. 162]; among his attributes were not only grapes, but also snakes. Like Osiris, he was regarded as a patron of the deceased.

During Classical Antiquity Dionysus/Bacchus was already perceived as a merely god of wine and frolics. Dionysia were accompanied not only by noisy merry-making, wine-drinking, singing, and dancing, but also by bonfires, commemoration of the dead, and homage to the phallus, all these being elements of the cult of the Black God. Dionysus/Bacchus was once venerated not only as a deity of wine, but also of celestial and terrestrial moisture. His nickname was Omestes, which means 'one who eats raw meat'; it can be concluded from this that bloody sacrifices were offered to him in archaic times. The central figure in western Slav carnival processions was a personage named Baħus [228b, pp. 205, 223]; it would be wrong to see in this no more than the influence of Classical Antiquity.

In the chapter "Bull-Moon" we discussed the Western Asian and Caucasian deities Tarhu, Tarhamos, and Tyr whose names stem from the protoform *tur/tor*. N. Marr has expressed an opinion that the ethnonyms *turk*, *tusk*, *tuš* are related and reach back to the protoform *tur/tor* [335a, p. 156]. Evidence from Turkic languages corroborates the possibility of such a phonetic transition: in those languages *tür/tör* has a variant *tüs/tös* [249, p. 45]. Siberian ethnic groups speaking Turkic languages have the word *tös* for 'idol'; the same word also designates an evil spirit which must be propitiated by sacrifices.

It may be assumed in the light of all this that the name of the "god of the stormy lower heaven," Teššob or Teišeba, venerated by the Hurrians, Hittites and Urartuans, goes back to the initial root-word *tur/tor*. The attributes of this god were the bull and the axe. His name can be discerned in that of a Georgian tribe, Tushin, as well as in the name of the Etruscans or Tuscans. The Abkhazian god Shessu, a patron of smiths, is comparable to Teššob; the name of Shessu is mentioned during feasts on New Year's eve [12, p. 416]. There was a god called Shesmu in Egypt, "the bestower of water and wine" who was also an executioner, hacking the bodies of sinners to pieces. He was represented as a man with a lion head [639, p. 243]. It is possible that Teskatlipoka, the name of the major Mayan god, an incarnation of evil and a source of misfortune, also belongs in this category; night, the north, North Star, mountain, cave, and earthquake were associated with him.

The Ingushes worshiped the god or goddess Tusholi as recently as the nineteenth century; B. Alborov interprets this name as Tush-eli, i.e., the god Tush [12, p. 424]. Tusholi was believed to bestow children and bring rain or drought. He did not tolerate disrespect, and demanded homage. Birth and death were in his power. There were a mask and a phallus-shaped pillar in Tusholi's sanctuary. In Ingushian beliefs recorded at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the image of Tusholi was a mixture of two supreme deities of the early farmer religion, male and female. The Ingushes regarded Tusholi

as female, pictured her as a bird, and associated her with the Virgin Mary.

B. Alborov believed that the Ossetian deity Susol should be identified with the Ingushian Tusholi [12, pp. 372, 425]. The word *sus* in the Ossetian language stands for 'phallus.' The Japanese god of the thunderstorm and of the sea, Susa-no-o, has a similar sounding name. Like many European and Near Eastern deities originating from the Neolithic Black God, he is rude, malicious, slighted by other gods, and, moreover, was evicted from heaven by the supreme god. The element *sus* in the name of this deity cannot be etymologized from the Japanese language. True, *susabu* ('act wildly, rage') can be seen as related to this name, but it does not necessarily mean that the god's name derives from that word, it could as well be the other way round.

Josephus Flavius reports that *sos* meant 'shepherd' in the Egyptian language. The word *susly*, as used by the Turkic-speaking Nogayians, means 'formidable, stern.' The lame old man in the Adygeian rite mentioned above represented a deity named Sozyreš. Soslan in the Ossetian epics (Sosruko of the Kabardinians) was born from a stone on which a shepherd's sperm fell; when newborn, he was burning-hot and could be handled only with the help of a pair of smith's tongs; Soslan was slain by a wheel cast by the daughter of the sun, but was buried alive, which produced vegetation.

It is likely that hydronyms and toponyms such as the river Sus in Morocco, Susa or Šwš, the ancient Elam capital, and the ancient Russian city of Suzdal originate from the eponym Sus.

As noted above, *sus* may be traced to *tus* which, in turn, goes back to one of the initial names of the Black God **t.r.* M. Fasmer, however, proposes another etymological hypothesis [543c, p. 579]. He suggests that the Proto-Indo-European **sus* ('pig') derives from the onomatopoeic **su* (in this case the Sanskrit *sūre*, 'produces, gives birth to,' would derive from the appellation for 'pig' in view of its high fecundity). Yet, other parallels contradict this etymology: cf. the Sumerian *su* ('moon') and Proto-Indo-European **seu/su* ('rain') [108, p. 680]. In Finnish, *susi* means 'wolf.' A similar word meant 'horse' in ancient oriental languages (the Hebrew *sus*, Akkadian *šisu*, Sumerian *zizu*, Hurrian *ešši*, Egyptian *šsm.t*, and Caucasian *ačua*; hence the Indo-European appellations for 'horse,' such as Sanskrit *aśva* and Avestian *aspa*²⁸²). The similarity of names for such different animals as the pig, the wolf, and the horse is accounted for by the fact that these animals, as well as similar-sounding words for 'phallus' and 'produce, give birth to,' were associated with the Black God in paleomythology.

The Ossetian Tutyr undoubtedly descends from the Neolithic Black God. In accordance with Ossetian tradition, he was originally the god's favorite angel, but he roused the god's wrath and was cast out of heaven. Tutyr forged

²⁸² V. Ivanov, on the contrary, holds that all these appellations for the horse were borrowed from the Proto-Indo-European language, since, as follows from archeological evidence, Proto-Indo-Europeans were the first to domesticate the horse. But the horse must have had a name before it was domesticated. A similar word was used for the donkey, which was venerated before Indo-Europeans appeared on the historical scene.

the metal vault of heaven. He was connected with rain and was a patron of wolves. The Ossets had a rite in which a child was taken to a smithy, its hand was placed on the anvil, and the smith dealt light blows on the hand, repeating, "May you be blessed by Tutyr" [582, pp. 98, 104].

L. Chibirov, furnishing this information on Tutyr, suggests that the deity derives from the Christian St. Theodore. But the opposite must be the case. St. Theodore's day falls on the 17th of February by the Church calendar; this coincides with the Carnival and Shrovetide. This Theodore is a strange fellow, if one looks at him from the Christian point of view. He is the lord of wolves. On his day the dead are remembered and brotherhoods are sworn. Like many similar mythological personages, Theodore had features not only of the Black God, but also of his Indo-European adversary: he rescued the sun and thus hurried the advent of spring [228, p. 299].

There were several underworld gods in Greek mythology, among them Plouton (the Roman Pluto), Hephaestus, and Hades or 'Aides, the archaic image of the underworld lord. Homer calls Hades the god of death and the "underground Zeus"; he was considered Zeus' brother. People were afraid to mention his name, until it became obsolete as early as the fifth century B.C.

Plouton was identified with Hades. The Greeks called him "black" [662, p. 73]; he was accompanied by Cerberus. Some myths link him to Plutos, the god of wealth. Plouton was believed to own metals in the earth's entrails and to be responsible for vegetation. His face is often covered with a veil in pictorial representations. He was worshiped near caves and fissures in rocks, believed to be entrances to the underworld.

Plouton and Plutos are most certainly variants of the same name. There was yet another character with a similar name in Greek mythology; he, too, had the characteristics of the Black God. This was Plutus, or Plutos, like the god of wealth. He had no eyes (this was explained by Zeus having blinded him), was lame (like many other mythological personages originating from the Black God), and was winged (unusual for Greek gods). The Roman Pluto was the son of Saturn, the lord of the dead.

Hephaestus, who lived in the underworld, personified a function of the Neolithic Black God: the notion of him as a smith. He was regarded as a patron of crafts. Aphrodite (a relic of the Neolithic mother-goddess) was his wife. Hephaestus was thrown down from Olympus by Zeus, which rendered him lame. He was ridiculed by the other Olympians, but common people honored him. Hephaestus was the patron of Attica; a feast, the Hephaestia, was dedicated to him in Athens; it involved torch-light processions.

The aquatic manifestation of the Black God among the Greeks was Poseidon. He ruled the seas, yet his features indicate earlier broader functions. Demeter was Zeus' wife in one case, and Poseidon's in another. Earthquakes and storms were caused by Poseidon. His epithets were "earth-shaker" and "earth-holder." In some myths he claimed domination of the world. Posedā, i.e., 'lord of the earth', was an archaic form of his name [645, p. 87] (similarly, the Sumerian god of the water element, Enki, was considered

"lord of the earth"). Poseidon was pictured as a bull. (How would advocates of a rationalistic interpretation of myths account for this? What did the god of the sea have to do with cattle-breeding or with earth cultivation?). He was offered sacrificial bulls, wild boars and rams; war horses and teams of chariots were dedicated to him; he was a patron of riders and was sometimes himself represented on horseback.

Oceanus was an archaic god of the sea in ancient Greek mythology. He lived in the distant West.

The Greek Plouton was paralleled by the Roman underworld god Dis, Dī, or Dispiter, the cause of death [662, p. 79]. The Celtic underworld god had the same name, Dis. He was represented holding a hammer, was considered a progenitor of mankind and a bestower of fertility and riches.

Neptune was the Roman analogue to the Greek Poseidon; however, Neptune was initially a god of springs and rivers, rather than seas. Like Poseidon, he was portrayed riding on a chariot. Neptune was one of the oldest Roman gods; he was not infrequently called Neptunus Pater. The 23rd of July was dedicated to him (this day coincides with that of the Slavic thundergod).

Priapus, a specifically phallic deity, was a mythological personage of Classical Antiquity who had some characteristics of the Black God. Despite his phallic connotations, he was depicted on gravestones. Priapus was identified with Pan, half-man and half-goat, a god of forests and fields, a patron of cattle-breeding, and a musician. Despite the peaceful nature of his image, as he is pictured in classical myths, Pan was attributed chthonic features; he was believed to assist in battles and inspired awe (hence the expression, "panic terror"). Classical authors represent him as a comic personage, yet peasants worshiped him as a god. Texts have reached us in which he is called father of all living things. Yet another element of myths points to the original affinity between Pan and the Black God: he sometimes engaged in battle with Cupid (Eros), who always won. This is characteristic of a later stage in the evolution of the image of the Black God, whose two manifestations, earthly and heavenly, developed into dissimilar beings in conflict with one another. Another possibility is that this conflict reflects the ancient myth about a struggle between two underworld deities.

The Roman Faunus corresponds to the Greek Pan; their names and functions are very much alike. Faunus, a grandchild of Saturn, was a god of forests and fields, a patron of cattle-breeding, hunting, and marriage, the inventor of poetry, and yet he inflicted harm. He knew how to avert Jupiter's lightning. He was believed to steal children, cause disease, seduce women. He was offered sacrificial dogs and goats. The rites of Faunus were performed in a grotto called Lupercalium (from *lupus* for 'wolf'). The feasts dedicated to him took place on the 5th of December and the 15th of February, i.e., at the beginning and end of the Mediterranean winter.

E. Shterman recalls ancient Roman etymologies tracing the name Faunus to *favere* ('help, assist'), *fatuor* ('be possessed'), and *fando* ('prophecy') [371b, p. 555]. If these words are related to the name of Faunus, they derive from it, but not vice versa. V. Ivanov maintains that the name

Faunus is etymologically related to the Latin *canis* ('dog') [195, p. 58]. However, the name of Faunus/Pan has parallels which bear witness to its persistence and common occurrence in its own form. The Latin *panis* ('bread') and *penis* ('phallus') can be linked to the name. Pan is the Polish for 'lord, master,' which corresponds to the title of the Black God. True, M. Fasmer points out that the western Slavic *pan* derives from the reconstructed proto-Slavic **gapan* ('shepherd'), which corresponds to the Sanskrit *gopas* ('shepherd'), where *go* stands for 'bull, cow,' and *pa* means 'to act, guard' [543, p. 195]. But perhaps the word formation took an opposite course. The Sanskrit *pa* may derive from Pan, since the functions of action and guarding are characteristic of the Black God. Another assumption is that the name Pan derives from the Proto-Indo-European **paus* ('make fertile') [371b, p. 279]. However, there is reason to believe that it goes back to the pre-Indo-European, early farming period. Pani in the Rig-Veda were demons who owned cows and treasures. Paniks is an ancient Prussian mythologized image of fire. In Chinese mythology, Pan-Kuy, born from a cosmic egg, was the first being, the progenitor of mankind, who created the world from a stone. He knew people's destinies and could affect the weather. He was identified with the lord of demons Chun-Kuy.

The names of Faunus and Pan have the root *p.n.* *f.n/v.n* which is present in many other names and terms associated with the image of the Black God and which apparently stem from the original root **b.r.*

The loss of the terminal nasal sound in the word *pan* produced the form **pa* which was transformed through reduplication into *papa* (or perhaps **pa* is analogous to **ba*, **ma*, which seem initially to have meant 'parent').

The Hittite underworld god was named Papayas. Another Hittite god Pappas was the progenitor of mankind; the Egyptians identified him with their Seth [730b, p. 1236]. Pepi was a throne name of the pharaohs; it meant 'father.' The Hittites had a goddess of fate, Papia. A god named Pappios was venerated in Asia Minor in Roman times; he was a patron of bulls [116, p. 36]. The Thracians and Phrygians called their supreme god Papas [2, p. 449]. The Scythians had a god named Papai whom Herodotus compared to Zeus. This name of the father-god may be compared to that of the Egyptian mythical serpent Apop. In the Chuvashian language, *papai* means 'thunder,' which is apparently analogous to the Turkic *babai* for 'old man' (naughty children were frightened into submission by that word).

The above suggests that the Indo-European *papa* ('father') was borrowed by Indo-European and also some non-Indo-European peoples from the early farming ethnic medium of Asia Minor and Southeastern Europe. As the earth and underworld god was considered a common father, it may be assumed that the Greek name for the mythical serpent *python* is etymologically related to the Sanskrit *pitar* ('father').

Only vague, often distorted echoes of ancient cult conceptions reached the peoples inhabiting regions at great distances from Western Asia and Europe, especially considering that during the third and second millennia B.C. the images of the former Neolithic religion underwent deformation,

and the notions of the male and female earth and heaven deities were confused. Accordingly, the Polynesian earth goddess has the name Papa, while the Australian heaven deity is called Papang [671, p. 240]. The Central American goddess of fertility, mountains, and earthquakes, Pitao, whose name resembles *pitar* and whose image is like that of the Neolithic earth god, is also a product of such deformation.

The personages of Greek mythology, in one way or another associated with the Black God, include the Centaurs; this name contains *taur* ('bull'), although they were half-man, half-horse. Centaurs had some of the Black God's features; they were aggressive, malicious, lascivious, knew the arts of building and medicine, were prophetic, and were sometimes pictured winged. The Talmud identifies Centaur, referred to as Asmodeus, with Satan. Greek mythology pictured Centaurs, as well as Satyrs, in the plural, which must be due to a later deformation of the Black God's initial image.

Slavic texts mention a certain Lado; his name is a male parallel to that of the goddess Lada. A medieval Russian manuscript characterizes Lado as the "god of merriment" [489a, p. 11]. There is "old man Lado" in old eastern Slavic songs ("the old man" is one of the Ukrainian nicknames for the devil). An old Russian song mentions "Lado, the serpent" [481, p. 20]. Lado taught men the art of agriculture (because he was an earth god) and apiculture (because the bee was a creature dedicated to his wife, the Great Goddess). In Bulgaria, Christmas carol singing is called *laduvanie*.²⁸³ Lado was glorified during the summer solstice. Like many other pre-Indo-European images and symbols, Lado was adapted to the rites of the solar cult; on St. Peter's day, the rising sun was welcomed with a song and refrain "Oh Lado!" [489c, p. 67]. We have already mentioned Ladon, a dragon or deity of rivers in Ancient Greece, and Latinus, the eponym of the Latinians. *L'ad* is a Ukrainian appellation for the "evil spirit." The Hebrew *ledah* ('birth') is most definitely associated with the names of the divine parents Lado and Lada. It is possible that the root-word *l.t/l.d* was formed according to the schema *l.t+v.l+t*; the latter is present, for example, in the Russian *vладыка* and Basque *beltz* ('lord').

Polish and Russian wedding songs and Christmas carols have a refrain "Oh Lel!" or "Lelu!"²⁸⁴ Some students of mythology have concluded from this that there was such a deity in Slavic paganism. V. Miller and A. Potebnya [413] categorically object to this conclusion. Yet categorical denial seems unwarranted in this particular case. Names of gods not infrequently became incorporated in folklore refrains. Incidentally, the refrain *lalu* exists in Lithuanian songs as well. The Latvian *lēls* means 'great,' the Lithuanian *lulotii* — 'to swing' [437, p. 224], the Ukrainian *lele* means 'misfortune, grief,' and mountain dwellers in Transcarpathia address a father as *lelu*. Lilu in Babylon was the demon of the storm, death, and disease. The Hattians and Hittites referred to the underworld god

²⁸³ The semantic identity of the terms *kolyadovat* and *ladovat* points to etymological affinity between the names Kolyada and Lada (and probably also Kali).

²⁸⁴ Lelu is a vocative form of the name Lel.

Leluwani and Lelwani, respectively. The Etruscans had a deity called Lalan. Georgian songs mention a certain Lil, Lili [482, p. 88]. It appears that the name Lel is etymologically connected with the Hebrew *el* ('god') and *elil* ('idol'), Hittite *ila* ('god'), and Nostratic **lil* ('burn, blaze'). The female form of Lel, Lil is incorporated in the already mentioned name of Lilith.

Certain Polish songs have a refrain "Lel and Polel"; a seventeenth century Russian chronicle reads that Lada is the mother of Lel and Polel [475, p. 399]. B. Rybakov denies the presence in Slavic paganism of a personage named Polel, maintaining that the word is a meaningless combination of sounds, but at the same time he recognizes the existence of Lel and calls this personage female. These constructions were necessary for Rybakov to prove his conception of a universal schema of two goddesses, a mother and a daughter. But Lel must be male judging by his characteristics. Lel and Polel are, in all probability, a Slavic version of the divine twins. Lada is their mother, as Leda was the mother of the twins in Greece.

In olden Russia, as well as in Ossetia, whose indigenous culture had nothing to do with the Russian, St. Nicholas was an extremely popular saint. As Catholics prayed not so much to God as to the Virgin Mary, the Russians chose to pray to St. Nicholas, identifying him with God. The popularity of this saint was due to the fact that features of the formerly venerated Black God were transposed on to him. St. Nicholas was highly respected and feared in Russia; people avoided mentioning his name, or giving it to newborn sons (it became common only when Christianity finally ousted the remnants of paganism [540, p. 87]).

St. Nicholas was portrayed holding a sword in one hand and a model of a building in the other, for he was considered a patron of warfare and building. He ruled over the waters and was at the same time a patron of agriculture [521, p. 217]. It was a custom in Russia to offer him a sacrificial bull. "Living fire" was lit in his honor. Ritual consumption of eggs was connected with veneration of St. Nicholas [540, pp. 111, 112]. He was a herdsman of mice in a Russian legend, whereas in French superstitions he figured in an exorcism against mice [240, pp. 193, 194]. In the Ukraine, he was considered a "master of wolves" [521, p. 47]. It was believed in Russia that he was linked to bears and snakes [540, p. 114]. St. Nicholas was pictured lame and was even known as the "lame devil"; the evil spirit was sometimes referred to by his name [371b, p. 217].

Two feasts were dedicated to St. Nicholas in the Orthodox calendar: the 9th of May and the 6th of December; they may be regarded as borderlines between the hot and cold halves of the year (as pointed out above, such borderlines could vary, for example, St. George's days at the end of April and the end of October). The May feast of St. Nicholas was observed mainly by young people (because the saint had lived half of his annual lifetime by then?); scrambled eggs were indispensable during the feast. St. Nicholas' December festival was observed by older men (because he had reached their age?). The feasts in honor of St. Nicholas involved abundant drinking, and it was considered improper to evade the drinking session. As

already mentioned, the etymology of the name Nicholas may be Nik-el, i.e., god Nick. In German legends, Nickel is an underground spirit.

The image of St. Nicholas must have originated from the earthly manifestation of the Black God, engaged in conflict with his heavenly manifestation. In popular beliefs he was counterposed to St. Elijah, as an earthly saint against a heavenly one. The conflict between them is reflected in a Russian fairy tale about a controversy between "Ilya and Nikola." As reported by seventeenth century European authors, the Russians believed that "had God died, Nicholas would have been God" [540, pp. 98-101].

The Greek goddess of victory, Nike, represented winged, can be seen as a female parallel to Nick. St. Nicholas became a prototype of the Christmas old man (Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, Santa Claus) in Western Europe.

B. Uspensky [540, p. 125] believes that St. Nicholas and St. Michael, the angel of death, are by origin the same mythological image. They certainly have many features in common; in particular, they are both associated with the "evil spirit" and considered guides of the souls of the dead in the other world. Their names may indeed be regarded as phonetic variants.²⁸⁵ The root of these names seems to derive from *b.r* = m.l, m.s, m.n, m.k, n.k, n.g; hence the series of names and ethnonyms of the type Min, Mangu, Naga, Ink, Angl, Nah, etc.

The ethnonym of the Chechenes and Ingushes is Nah or Nahč. This is believed to mean 'man.' But ethnonyms of many peoples acquired the significance 'man' (as the names of the gods Baal, Moloch, and Adonis acquired the meanings 'husband,' 'king,' and 'lord'). There are two settlements — a town and a village — in the Southern Caucasus named Nahčavan (Nakhichevan in Russian). In the sixth and seventh centuries, coins with the inscription "Nahč" were minted in the region of the town of Nakhichevan [415, p. 17]. This ethnonym (or proper name, or title?) may be recognized as *n.k+t/č* and compared to the Indo-European word for 'night' (the proto-Slavic **noktas*, Lithuanian *naktis*, Sanskrit *nák*, and so on), and to the Finnish *nuotio* ('bonfire'). The proto-Slavic **noktas* ends in *-s* which is a demonstrative pronoun (i.e., the article which became the ending *-s* in Greek, Latin, and Lithuanian). Merged with the suffix *t*, this ending produced the sound *č* in some Indo-European appellations for 'night' and in the Checheno-Ingushian *nahč*. The word for 'night' is linked with the name of the Black God not in these languages alone; for example, there is the Semitic *leil-lil*.

The Slavic *Vēles* or *Vōlos* was pictured as a man-bull; in one of these versions of his name the root is *vol* ('bull, ox'). Veles is defined as a "cattle god" in medieval Russian texts. He was a patron not only of cattle, but also of fields of grain. There is a supposition that Shrovetide was initially a feast in honor of Veles. The day of the Orthodox St. Vlas, the 11th of February, falls on Shrovetide. People avoided working on that day [310, p. 56]. St. Vlas was considered a protector from wolves and other wild animals [228b, p. 322]. Veles was associated with the bear [98, p. 153]. An idol of Veles was set up on a hill top; he was prayed to for

²⁸⁵ Mikola is the Ukrainian version of Nikolai (Nicholas).

rain; an eternal flame was maintained in his honor, and his rites were accompanied by singing and dancing [198, pp. 53, 64]. A ninth century Czech manuscript identified Veles with Pan [489a, p. 132].

The image of Veles was associated with the constellation Pleiades [198, pp. 49-53] which the Slavs used to call *Volosožary*. These stars' shining was believed to betoken a successful bear hunt. This cluster of stars is part of the constellation Taurus (i.e., 'bull'); it was referred to as the "bull star" in Sumer. Remembrance of the dead was connected with the constellation Pleiades in ancient times. There are also other indications of Veles' connection with the world of the dead.

V. Ivanov and V. Toporov suggest that the connection of the "cattle god" Veles with the kingdom of the dead may be explained by the ancient Indo-European view of the other world as a pasture [198, p. 67]. B. Rybakov thus explains the association of Veles with the beyond: Veles, he says, was initially a bear-god, a patron of hunting, and as the hunter kills his game, Veles came to personify first the slain animal, then death in general and the world of the dead [475, p. 425]. But this is not the point; the Black God was the lord of the next world from the very start. Old Russian and western Slavic texts identify Veles with the devil [198, pp. 57, 66], i.e., the former underworld god. Western Slavs have an expression "beyond the sea to Veles" [200, p. 59], meaning 'to the devil, to the next world'.

Veles had features similar to Perun's. The Avesta refers to the Pleiades constellation, with which Veles was associated, as *Perune* [198, pp. 47, 49]. Perun was the thundergod; myths identify the thundergod with the snake fighter (i.e., an adversary of the Black God). This means that Perun was the enemy of the Black God; but some variants of the snake fighter's name comprise the root *vel* [200, p. 125]. All this indicates that the snake fighter and his adversary were one and the same. V. Ivanov and V. Toporov explain this as a "phenomenon of inversion of mythological opposition" [198, p. 73]. Yet here we have a different phenomenon: splitting the Black God's image into two deities personifying his different features, as well as transferring some characteristics of the Black God to images of Indo-European deities.

M. Fasmer approaches the proposed etymologies of the name of Veles/Volos with excessive purism [543a, p. 287]. In his opinion, Veles and Volos are dissimilar names that cannot be reduced to the same root, and he sees no grounds for associating either with the Russian words *bely* ('white') and *veliky* ('great'); he doubts that they are connected with the Old Russian *velet*, *volot* for 'giant' and with the Lithuanian *veles* ('souls of the dead'), and he denies their connection with the Czech *veles* for 'devil' and with the Greek name of Baal, *Bēlos*. Yet all these etymologies are confirmed by the semantic association of the corresponding words with the image of the Black God. V. Ivanov and V. Toporov are of the opinion that *Veles* and *Volos* are variants of the same name, with which Russian words such as *volk* ('wolf'), *molot* ('hammer') and *molniya* ('lightning') are associated, as well as the Tokharian *wāl* ('ruler') and the name *Volá* (a demon in ancient Indian myths) [198, pp. 45, 54-74, 125].

A. Afanasiev compared the name of Slavic Veles with that of the Lithuanian god of the deceased *Velnias* [40c, p. 239]. Like Veles, *Velnias* was a patron of cattle. In addition, he was a musician and could touch off a storm, was endowed with wisdom, and was called "prophetic." He could assume the image of a fiery serpent or a snake with a red head and a crown, was capable of transforming himself into a wolf, a dog, a pig, and a he-goat. *Velnias* lived in bogs and lakes, abducted women, and drank human blood [698, pp. 88-92]. Veneration of *Velnias* is recorded in no less than four hundred Lithuanian toponyms and hydronyms comprising the root *vel*. In modern Lithuanian *velnias* means 'devil.'

The name *Volos*—*Veles*—*Velnias* was known not only in Russia and the Baltic region. This is confirmed by the Czech *veles*, Tokharian *wāl*, and ancient Indian *Volá*; Voland or Wieland, a magic blacksmith in Scandinavian sagas, Volva was the Scandinavian goddess of fate [730b, p. 1658]; the Etruscans had a malevolent deity called *Vel*. The root *v.l* combined with the suffix *k/g* produces words like *volk* ('wolf'), *Vulcanus*, and *Volga*.

The Roman *Vulcānus* (*Volcānus*), who was considered a resident of the fiery underground and patron of blacksmiths, originated in the Black God. Classical authors report that in archaic times people were burned to death in his honor. The goddess Maya was venerated alongside him. The priest of *Vulcanus* had to be of plebeian background, an indication that this was a deity of the pre-Indo-European population whose descendants made up the lower strata of society. It was believed that *Vulcanus*, like Saturn, was dethroned by Jupiter. In the opinion of V. Abayev [3, pp. 592, 594], the name *Vulcanus* derived from a word which meant 'wolf.'

The root *v.l* appears in various languages of Eurasia in words which may be semantically related to the image of the Black God (in some cases of the Great Goddess): the Latin *volatica* for 'witchcraft, magic, sorcery' (cf. the Russian *volhiv* for 'magician, sorcerer'), *villus* ('wool'; cf. the Russian *volos* for 'hair'), *villa* ('country house'; cf. the Latvian *villa* for 'village'), *vultur* ('bird of prey, carrion vulture'), *volva* ('vulva, womb'), *volupia* ('temple of sensual love'), the archaic Latin *volgus* ('people'); Udmurtian *val* and Marian (the Volga region) *vele* ('horse'); the Komi (the Northern Urals) *völ* ('ox'), Arabic *aghwāl* ('demons, monsters'; cf. the Daghestanian village of Agvali), the ancient Germanic *voluspá*, a name of the underground world of the dead [672, p. 186], and the Greek *diabolos* which apparently means 'god Volos'.²⁸⁶ Also belonging here may be the Russian *bolvan* ('idol'), Lithuanian *bulvōnas* ('idol'), ancient Turkic *balaban* ('big, belvan' ('gravestone, monument'), Turkic *balaban* ('big, thick'), Swedish *bulvān* and Gaelic *balban* ('straw man') [543a, p. 186]; the Nostratic **wol* means 'large, big' [210b, p. 109].

This type of word, semantically connected with the Black God, apparently also had a different form, with the root consonants *v.r*, to judge by examples such as the Russian *vrag*, *vorog* ('enemy') and *voron* ('raven'). The

²⁸⁶ See chapter "The White God" on words of the *dios* and *theos* type, whose etymological connections are not confined to Indo-European languages and go back to the early farmer period.

second root consonant *r* instead of *l* is present not only in the Russian words of the semantic group being analyzed; for example, the Finnish *verkanen* ('devil'), ancient Egyptian *wr* ('large, big'), Germanic *warg* ('werewolf'), Old Icelandic *vargr* ('wolf, villain'), and Latin *vir* ('man'); this last root is also found in Latin words connected semantically with the Great Goddess: *virgo* ('maiden'), *virga* ('branch'). The broad semantics of words with the root *v.l.* *v.r* cannot be traced to the Nostratic **wol* ('large, big'), which itself must be regarded as only one of the terms associated with the Black God's image. It was assumed above that the archaic *v.l.* *v.r* derive from the even earlier **b.r.*, in which one can see the oldest appellation for the bear — the initial image of the earth god.

The name of the ancient Semitic god Bel, Balu (Baal) also derives from the initial root **b.r.*

Balu/Baal of the ancient Semites was the lord of the world. He was characterized by fierce bellicosity, was the master of waters (he was venerated near springs and mountain streams), and was a personification of virility (he therefore bestowed fertility). Humans, especially children, were sacrificed to him by burning or being buried alive. Incidentally, human sacrificial offerings, in particular of infants, remained common throughout Europe until the Middle Ages. Baal was the thundergod, "he who rides on clouds" in a Ugaritic text; lightning and the moon were his attributes. Baal's symbol was a phallus set up as a pillar. The cult of Baal involved erotic revelry. Cult prostitution took place in Baal's temples; he smiled upon debauchery. In rites and processions in honor of Baal, his priests and most ardent followers gave themselves over to frantic dancing and, in a frenzied state, inflicted wounds on themselves. Baal's spouse Anath, the warrior-goddess, was called "cow." Baal was shown as a bull, he was believed to live on a mountain, and was identified with Seth in Egypt.

The Assyro-Babylonian Bel, regarded as an earth god, the creator of the world, and the king of gods, is analogous to the western Semitic Baal. He was pictured in the image of a bull; like Baal, he died and rose from the dead.

Identical to Bel was the Babylonian Marduk, an awesome warrior god who was defeated, imprisoned, and re-emerged. This episode in the life of the lord of the world is typical not only of Semitic myths; as reported by Plutarch, the Paphlagonians believed that the god was bound hand and foot in captivity in winter, and was freed of his fetters in spring.

Bel was the name of the legendary king of Ancient Egypt; legendary kings are generally mythologized images transmitted from gods to fabulous rulers, founders of cities, law givers, progenitors.

The name Baal/Balu, Bel is believed to derive from a similar Semitic word meaning 'master, sovereign.' In reality, however, the word goes back to the corresponding name of the god. As was noted above, in the Basque language, which is neither Indo-European nor Semitic, *beltz* means 'sovereign.'

Related to the Nostratic **wol* is the Turkic-Mongolian *ola, ula* ('large, big'). In this case the loss of the initial *v* (as in the Proto-Indo-European **ulk* for 'wolf') suggests that the Nostratic **la* ('burn') could have originated from the oldest name of the god of earth and of fire **b.r.*

The name of the Black God in the form *b.l* is not confined to the Semitic cultural sphere. A deity named Bel is known in the mythology of the Greeks, eastern Slavs, and African Fulahs. Beal was a supreme deity of the Druids (another name of his was Alla) [865, p. 150]. Be'al was a British god of fire [730a, p. 188]. In Indian mythology, Bali was initially righteous, but was subsequently exiled to the underworld, of which he became the lord. The Belas are Sumatran evil spirits. Beli (Belenos in a latinized form) was a Celtic deity of unknown nature; a legendary king of Britain answered to the same name. In Norse mythology, Beli was the spirit of storms; in Gaul, Bile was the lord of the dead, to whom human sacrifices were offered. Balor was a Celtic demon of the night who dwelt on the sea bottom; his glance slew, and because of this he was doomed to have his eyes permanently closed [730a, pp. 176, 197].

Certain names of female mythological personages originating from the image of the Black God's spouse, the Great Goddess, are associated with the name *b.l/v.l.* Belili was the Sumerian goddess of love, the moon, and the underworld. Belit was a Sumerian virgin goddess, the "queen of gods." In Assyro-Babylonia, Belit, Beltis was the spouse of Bel or Assur; her rites were usually orgiastic. Beltan, Bellenus was the Celtic goddess of fire. Beltane was a Celtic feast held on the 1st of May. Bellona was a Roman goddess of warfare, represented as an armed woman, and sister as well as wife to Mars. Belinda is a feminine name in Western Europe; in Italy it is taken to mean 'snake' [730a, p. 197]. Hence also the Latin *belua* ('monster') and *bella* ('beautiful'), for the Great Goddess was a monster and at the same time an incarnation of beauty.

In southern Slavic folklore, *vilas* were winged and goat-legged female creatures who bestowed beneficial rain. The etymological affinity of the Slavic deity Veles/Volos with the term *vila* is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that medieval Russian sources sometimes refer to this deity as Vil.²⁸⁷ Vilas were also known to eastern Slavs [541, p. 36]. The valkyries of Scandinavian myth were maidens of Odin. They chose those to be slain in battle, so that their name has been wrongly etymologized from the word *wahl* ('choice'). Some sagas picture them as ferocious and bloodthirsty.

Since some names for the Great Goddess contained the root *bel*, the Slavic *bely* ('white') may be traced back to it. The Old Icelandic *bál* ('fire') and the Lithuanian *bala* ('bog') are related to this word [543, p. 148], although neither fire nor bog are white. The etymological affinity is due to the circumstance that white, fire, and the bog were attributes of deities whose names comprise the root-word *b.l*.

The Basque *beltz* ('sovereign') has the suffix *-t* which in this case may not indicate feminine gender. An analogous example is the English *bolt*. It means 'arrow' (short, stout, usually with a massive head); 'lightning stroke'; 'moving bar'; 'to rise suddenly'; 'to be erect.' Why such dissimilar meanings of the word? They can be accounted for on the assumption that its original meaning was 'phallus' and that it was semantically related to the image of the Black God. This assumption, in particular, conforms to

²⁸⁷Viy, a mythical creature whose glance killed, figures in a story by N. Gogol.

the assumption that the Greek *phallos* is a variant of the root-word *b.l/v.l*. Other etymologically related words of this sequence, such as the Greek *peles* ('stone'), German *Pfeil* ('post'), Russian *paliça* ('club, cudgel') and *paleç* ('finger'), have the suffix *-t* altered. It is possible that *-t* is a formant of the genitive case, i.e., an indication of belonging. It can be compared to the Nostratic locative particle **da (-d, -t)* which was sometimes genitive.

With due regard for the interchange of the sounds *b* and *v*, and *r* and *l*, this group may include *var* which is a Slavic root of words for notions associated with fire. With the prefix *s-*, it gives the name of a god mentioned in medieval Russian sources, Svarog. Svarožič, the son of Svarog in old Russian texts, is fire. According to a Western European medieval author, Svarog was a sun god [129, p. 285]; this opinion could have arisen because fire was Svarog's attribute. Legends relate that Svarog taught people blacksmithing; he was identified with Hephaestus [200, p. 17]. The name of Svarog nearly coincides with the Sanskrit *svarga* ('heaven'); a semantic explanation for this is that the heavenly manifestation of the underworld god was conceptually transformed into the heaven god.

A possible linguistic connection has been assumed between the eastern Slavic Svarog and western Slavic Rarog. Fairy tales narrate that Rarog can be born from an egg laid by a black hen, if the egg is hatched by a woman sitting on a stove for nine days without praying or washing [200, pp. 140, 141].

In Semitic as Indo-European mythology, the early farmers' Black God disintegrated into separate parts which were in conflict with one another: the lord of the underworld Mot/Mutu, or the lord of the sea Yam/Yammu, is the enemy of Baal/Balu. Success in this struggle varied. Mot succeeded in defeating Baal and in establishing his domination over the world. As a result, a summer drought ensued, but, as autumn approached, the sun goddess induced Mot to go back to his underworld abode. Baal returned, and this brought autumn rains.

It is possible to adduce counterparts to the name of the ancient Semitic lord of the sea Yam/Yammu. Yamá in the Rig-Veda is a god of death and at the same time a universal progenitor; he gave people fire. His next world's kingdom was guarded by dogs (as Cerberus in the realm of Hades) who delivered the souls of the dead to him. Yim was the god of storms in Sumerian mythology. The Avesta mentions Yima as a primogenitor of mankind who once ruled over the world. Ymir was a progenitor of the world in Scandinavian mythology; the cow was his wife. The supreme deity of Ugro-Finnic ethnic groups was called Yuma, resembling *yumu* for 'thunder'; *yum* means 'god' and 'heaven' in the languages of some peoples inhabiting regions of North Siberia [778, p. 260].

Yang (Huang) is the lord of the next world in Chinese mythology; this name and the corresponding image are said to have been borrowed from the ancient Indian Yamá [371b, p. 684]. It would be more correct, however, to assume that both were inherited from older, early farmer cultures. Especially so since Yang, who could be a double of the Indian Yamá, is not the only one in China with a name of this kind: there are also Yang-gun, the god of waters, and Yang-di, the god of fire and of the sun (his

affinity to the Neolithic earth god is evident in the second part of the name, *di*, the Chinese for 'earth'). Yang-di or Huang-di possessed typical features of the Western Asian Neolithic earth and underworld god: he was a thundergod, believed to have four faces, he taught people trades, music, and healing; the bear, dragon, tortoise, and lizard were his sacred animals; the planet Saturn was dedicated to him [371b, p. 605].

It has been suggested that the names of the ancient Iranian Yima and Scandinavian Ymir derive from a word meaning 'twin' or 'double.' The Neolithic earth god, shown above, was twofold; moreover, Yima was a twin brother of his wife Yimeh. Nevertheless, a different genesis of the name seems more likely. One should pay attention to the coincidence between the Indian Yamá and the Slavic yáma ('pit, hole'). Linguists have not established the etymology of the latter word, yet among words used for comparison there is, in particular, the Irish *uaimh* ('cave, grave') [543d, p. 555]. The Nostratic **jama* means 'water, sea' [210a, p. 279]. These words could have been formed by the scheme *b.r.m.r.* Ymir, Yima, Yama, Yam.

An alternative way of transforming the initial root could be: *b.r.m.r.m.lh*, Melekh, Moloch. Moloch and Baal are names for the same god; he was sometimes called Baal-Melek. Melekh in Hebrew means 'king.' The word obviously derives from the name of the deity regarded as sovereign of the world.

Classical authors identified the Semitic Moloch with Cronus and Saturn. A bull-shaped copper idol of Moloch was offered human sacrifice put to death by burning. Sometimes, however, the sacrifice was symbolic: children were made to walk through the fire; this was supposed to signify that the god had received his due. Walking through fire, practised throughout Europe and in the Caucasus during festivities stemming from the cult of the Black God, seems to be connected with this ancient custom; it could also have been a kind of insurance against illness.

Idolized fire was called *atar*, *athar* in Ancient Iran. B. Illych-Svitych finds the connection between the Iranian *atar* and Latin *ater* ('black'), surmised by some linguists, open to question [210b, p. 103]. These words, however, not only nearly coincide phonetically, but also semantically related, pertaining to the image of the underworld god. The Latin *ater* stands not only for 'black,' but also 'ominous, pernicious, malicious,' usual characteristics of the Black God. The Nostratic thesaurus has yet another pair of words which point to the affinity of the two notions: **kara* ('burn, scorch') and **karä* ('black') [210a, pp. 337, 340] (**kara* for 'rock, steep rise' can be compared to these words in terms of mythological and semantic connection). It is possible that related to these words are the Hebrew *or* ('light'), Russian *žar* ('heat'), Latin *ara* ('altar'), Hittite *ur* ('forest'), and Hattian *ur* ('water spring'), as well as appellations for 'earth': Sumerian *urta*, Hebrew *ereç*, German *Erde*, and Scandinavian *jard*.

In the ancient Egyptian language the word for snake was formed with the root *r.t*. An earth deity called Arçu was formed with the root *r.t*. An ancient Arabic goddess was once venerated in Syria. An ancient Arabic goddess of obscure nature was called Ruda, which means 'earthy.' In ancient India, the god of healing was Rudra; the mole, a creature of the earth, was his cult animal.

Some instances suggest that *r+t/d* designated the earth's sphere; others suggest that it designated the god of earth or his essential characteristics. Words with the root *r.d/r.t* mean 'red' in a number of Indo-European languages, the color of the underworld god, or 'ore,' rocks from which metal is extracted; in the Sumerian language there is also *urudu* ('red, ore'). There was a town called Eridu in Sumer. The Scythian *ard* for 'deity,' Irish *ard* for 'great, big,' and Turkic *erk* for 'power, lord' pertain semantically to the names of the Black God. Erd, Erdä in Vainakhian mythology was a male god imagined as a he-goat, who occupied such a high position in the local pantheon that his name acquired the common meaning of god. The eastern Slav Rod was a name for the god-progenitor and thundergod. In the Old Russian language, some words semantically associated with the image of the Black God have the root *r.d*: *rodry* ('red'), *rod* ('hell'), *rodia* ('lightning') [475, p. 452]; this sequence includes modern Russian words, such as *rodnik* ('water source'), *rodit* ('give birth'). The Latin *ardeo* ('burn') is etymologically related to *ars, artis* ('trade, art'), because the Black God was considered a patron of these human activities. The root *r.d* sometimes took the form *r.g*: the Armenian *aregagn* ('sun') literally means "Areg's eye"; Argos of Greek myths was a creature with a thousand eyes (apparently the starlit sky); in the Svanian language *argi* means 'house, home' (the Black God was a patron of dwellings).

Words of the *adar* type are associated with the image of the Black God. Adar in the Hebrew (earlier in the Babylonian) calendar is the name of ■ month falling at the end of February and beginning of March, i.e., between the European Carnival and Easter. (During this period Kybele's worshipers fasted in sympathy with her sorrow at Attis' death, and observant Jews mark the "Fast of Esther" which terminates in triumph with Haman's execution.) The Celtic Adar or Adder is ■ name for the sacred snake [730, p. 31]. The Chechenian lord of the underworld was called Eter, that of the Ossets Atar or Eshtur.

Adad was an ancient name for the constellation Ursa Major, which, with its constituent North Star, was associated with the Black God. The archaic version of the Mesopotamian name Hadad, a thundergod and a smith incarnated in the image of a bull, was Addu; it compares with the Greek lord of the underworld Hades, 'Aides, and the Etruscan Aita. The Greek Attis also seems to be associated with these names.

The myth of Attis contains some strange details. In general, however, it corresponds to other Near Eastern myths about a god dying and rising from the dead. His grieving mistress Kybele looks for his body, as Isis looked for Osiris and Anath for Baal. Like Osiris and Baal, Attis appears less as an incarnation of vegetation than as an earth god. Incidentally, his name means 'father' [167, p. 46]. Attis of the Greeks was considered a keeper of graves. The crescent was his emblem, and he-goats were sacrificed to him.

The name of the Hattian deity *Hati* could be a phonetic variant of *Attis*. Nothing much is known about the Hattian *Hati*, but *Hati* of the Hittites was a thundergod and the husband of the *Ishtar* goddess. The wolf of Teutonic myths bears the name *Hati* [829b, pp. 37, 565]. In the Georgian

language, *ḥati* means 'holy, sacred, sanctuary'; it once stood for 'god' [337, p. 110]. The Georgian *ḥati* can also mean 'cross,' an emblem of the earth god in the early farmer religion. In order to shed light on the etymology of the names Addu, Hades, Aita, Attis, and Hati one can turn to such words, on the one hand, as the Chinese *di* and Greco-Doric *da* ('earth'), Sumerian *udu* ('ram'), Basque *idi* ('bull'), and, on the other, the Sumerian *ada* and Turkic *ata*, Roman *dada*, Greek *tata* and Ukrainian *tato* for 'father', Slavic *ded* ('old man'), Georgian *dāda* ('mother'), Baltic *tete* ('mother'), Hebrew *dād* for 'nipple, female breast,' and Italian dialect *dada* for 'mother' and 'wet nurse' (some African tribes call the sacred cow by this word). Dadu in Babylon was a form of the name of the thundergod Addu. In the Sumerian language *dudu* stood for 'deity.' Tota (Teute) in Ancient Mexico was a god of fire and a culture hero. In Ancient Egypt, Tot (Teuti) was a god of the dead and patron of sciences, written language, and building, i.e., also a culture hero; the west and the moon were dedicated to him. He was one of the most archaic of Egyptian gods; ancient inscriptions refer to him as "the one who always existed."

It is for linguists to investigate the affinity between this sequence of names and terms and their probable descent from the protoform **t.r.* Yet an analysis of mythological evidence reveals their affinity.

The names and terms of the *d.l* type associated with the Black God apparently also follow the protoform **t.r*. The Nostratic **duli* means 'fire' and **dila* — 'sunlight' [210a, pp. 219, 221]. The Hittite Dali (or Tali) is a variant of the name Taru or Tarhu. Dal was a Svanian goddess of hunting and love, portrayed with long loose hair. Dali was a female demon in Georgian mythology; she lived among rocks, was a patroness of hunting, and had an aptitude for evil deeds and sensual love. Däla was the Vainakhian supreme god. Tālos in ancient Greek mythology was a half-man, half-bull who received human sacrifices by way of burning. The Greek Atlas was a mythical cattle-breeding king, who knew the depths of the sea and was turned into a crag or mountain. Atlath of the Phoenicians was the queen of the night. In the Aztec language *atl* meant 'water.' In Ancient Mexico, Tlalok was a serpent guarding a sacred tree; he was also a god of rain and storm. The Greek Dadalus should also be mentioned here: he designed a labyrinth and could rise to the sky; his name seems to derive from Dai-Dalos, the name of a legendary sculptor who carved idols that came to life.

In Assyria, Nabu, the biblical Nebho, was the "ruler of heaven and earth." He must have been held in high esteem, for an Akkadian inscription reads: "Trust Nabu, but no other god." He was referred to as "the one who opens up springs" and "lord of the yield." He was a patron of royal authority, the art of the scribe, and wisdom. He was offered human sacrifices. Babylonian kings usually bore his name; western Semites also had names of the type Nebobal or Nebobad [411, p. 357]. There was a Mount Nebo in Moab.

A god named Nabok was venerated in Armenia. Nb'z in South Arabia was the "king of darkness" and "lord of hell." In Ancient Iran Nibhḥaz was a personification of darkness and of a mysterious sinister power. Anubis in the image

of a dog was venerated in Egypt. It is likely that the following words are etymologically related to the name Nabu: Avestan *nabah* ('sky, heaven'), Hittite *nepiš* ('sky, heaven'), Russian *nebo* ('sky, heaven'), Hittite *nepiš* ('sky, body'), Czech *nav* ('underworld'), Latvian *nāve* ('death'), Gothic *naus* ('dead'), Old Icelandic *njól* ('night'), Latin *nebula* ('darkness'), and Hebrew *navah* ('to bark').

The Hurrian Kumarbi, called "the father of gods," represented the lower regions of the universe. He engaged in a battle with the heaven god Anu for dominion. The following passage of the myth telling this story is of particular interest: "Kumarbi rushed forward, and Anu seized him by the legs and pulled him down from heaven" [783, p. 156]. This is the oldest known account of the lord of heaven seizing the earth demon by the legs and casting him down.

The root of this name of the Hurrian Black God is *kum*. *Kum* is the Lycian for 'sacred.' *Komos* is the Greek for 'bear.' Korean and Japanese for 'bear' is *kom*, *kuma*. *Kamui* is 'god' in the Ainu language; the Ainu use this word for the bear as well, and regard the bear as "the god dwelling in the mountains" [558, p. 561]. Kemoš was the supreme god of the Moabites who called themselves the people of Kamoš. The Ammonites mentioned him beside Moloch. Children were sacrificed to him as to Moloch. He was a god of warfare, was represented armed, and was associated with fire. Stone was his fetish and he was worshiped in high places. Ashtor was his wife. In all probability, the biblical name of Ham is associated with that of Kamoš or Hamos. There was a city of Kir-Kamoš or Kirhemīš in Babylonia. In Hebrew, *kam* means 'enemy' (it is possible, though, that the word derives from the notion 'to rise'), *ham* stands for 'hot,' *hamor* for 'donkey' and 'wine.' Comus or Komos was a Roman deity of drinking, represented as a winged man holding a torch [730, p. 363], though neither wings nor fire are logically associated with taking alcohol. It follows from these examples that **k.m* was one of the Black God's names. Deriving from this word are apparently the Russian-Turkic-Arabic *kumač* ('red cloth'), Russian *kumir* ('idol'), and Semitic **kumrā* ('priest'). The Nostratic **kuma* ('swallow, devour') probably also belongs here. Ancient Egyptians called their country *Kami* or *Kamit*. The following toponyms may have originated from the name of the god **k.m*: the sacred city of the Hurrian and Urartuan thundergod Teshub, Kumena; the ancient city of Komana in Cappadocia; the ancient city of Cūmae in Campania; the sacred city of Kum in Iran; the medieval settlement Kum in mountainous Tajikistan; the Hurrian region Kummuh; and the old Dahestanian village Kumuh.

The Kumyk are a Daghestanian ethnic group. It is commonly assumed that this ethnonym derives from the Kimaks or Kumans (the same as the Kypchaks or Polovtsy), a Turkic people, who having issued from the upper reaches of the Irtysh River, moved to the steppes of Southern Russia and the Northern Caucasus in the 9th to the 12th centuries. But before that classical authors mentioned the region Comania in the Northern Caucasus. Possibly the name of the Cimmerians, an Iranian-speaking people who inhabited the south of Russia in the 7th century B.C., is connected with this widespread term *k.m.*

The origin of the name of an Ossetian pagan deity Rekom

seems to have the root *k.m.* Features of the cult of Rekom, such as his specifically male role, patronage of hunters and warriors, a sanctuary of the Virgin Mary next to his temple, and offerings of arrows characterize him as the Black God.

It is possible that the Old Slavic *komn'* and Old Prussian *camnet* ('stallion, horse') are connected with the same *k.m.* M. Fasmer says that the Lithuanian word *kume* ('mare') does not belong in this category [543b, p. 304]; yet one can see in it the feminine form of the root *k.m.*, as also in the name of Kuma, goddess of the moon and wife of the sun in the mythology of South American Indians, who was represented with raised hands, obviously under the influence of Old World cult conceptions in the second to first millennia B.C.

One is tempted to assume that **kōm* was an appellation for the bear in some languages of early farmers. However, this is not where one should look for the original meaning of the word. Eastern Slavs have a word *kum* whose meaning is somewhat uncertain. As shown by the ethnographer M. Kosven, *kum* was originally an appellation for ■ representative of the mother's family related to the newborn baby [254, p. 107]. *Kume* means 'child' in Basque. It is possible that these words were once connected with the notion of birth. Another, similar form is associated with the same notion; its second consonant is *n* instead of *m* — see the Nostratic **kūni* ('woman') and **kanā* ('give birth, be born') [210a, pp. 306, 335]. The Latin *uvula* ('vulva') and *cunae* ('cradle, motherland') should be added here. Apparently, the forms *kum* and *kun* are phonetic variants of the same initial root. *K.r* must have been such ■ root; the transition *r-n* is a common phenomenon of phoneme dissimilation.

Since the earth god was a progenitor, creatures that represented him were sometimes referred to by a word expressing the notion of birth. That is probably why the bear was called *kum*, *kom*, and the dog *canis* (the Nostratic **kūjna* [210a, p. 361]). *K'wen* is the Chinese for 'dog,' despite the fact that the Chinese language does not belong to the Nostratic category.

Pagan Syrians venerated the deity Kewan, who ~~was~~ believed to devour children; ■ corresponding Hebrew name was Kiyun [411, pp. 342, 343]. The planet Saturn was called Kiyun or Keiwan by ancient Hebrews and Arabs. Other ancient Eastern names for the planet Saturn were Hiyun, Hevan, and Han. Also belonging here would be the Hebrew Cain, which means 'spear, spear head.' The biblical Cain was ■ farmer, with no semantic relationship to spear from the standpoint of positive logic, but there is an obvious connection between the notions in terms of Neolithic religion; *kain* is the Arabic for 'blacksmith' (the feminine form of the word, *kaina*, means 'female dancer').

A Sumerian word for earth is *kin*. In some Daghestanian languages the words for 'snake' are *kini* and *kine*. *Kanuk* is the Eskimo for 'wolf.' Kune is the Darghinian (in Dagestan) name of the female guardian of the dwelling, who abides in the central post of the house. Akon was the name of a sacred serpent in Ancient Mesopotamia, Kon a corresponding Mayan name [730a, p. 283]. Apparently these are the Turkic *khan*.

In the opinion of A. Kononov, the formant -k in the

ethnonym *türk* is an abbreviation of **kūn* which meant 'kinship' [249, p. 44] (probably more accurately 'birth'). In this case **tūr-kūn*, which meant 'born of Tur, children of Tur,' must have been the protoform of the ethnonym of the Turki. By way of comparison, *ālkūn* ('people') in the Turkmenian language obviously at first had the meaning 'born of Al, children of Al.' Likewise in Hebrew, *'em*, *'ima* mean 'mother' and *'am*, *'uma* mean 'people.' Forms of the Black God's name like Tarkomn and Targhim may be interpreted as 'Tar the parent.' The word *kentaur* (*centaur*) must have had the same meaning.

Alongside the variants **kum/kun*, the paleoword for 'birth,' there were other forms, phonetically similar, semantically related, and probably identical to them in their initial form: *kuy*, *kiy*. The Semitic *kain* is etymologically related to the Slavic *kuy*, *kuyu*, *kovat* ('to forge') [379, p. 234]. *Kiy*, *Kuy* is the divine blacksmith in archaic Slavic tradition [371a, p. 648]. That this deity was once venerated is attested by the fact that there are some sixty places named after him in Eastern Europe (Kiev, Kievo, Kiyov, and so on). The feminine form of *Kiy* is *Kika* (*kika* of the southern Slavs means 'braid, lock of hair'). Hence the Russian *kikimora* ('female hobgoblin', the second part of the word is the Slavic *mora*, 'evil spirit', Old English *mara*, 'ghost'). This word with the suffix *-l* produces the East Slavic *kukla* ('doll') and, with the same meaning, the Greek *koukla* and Latin *cuculla* (evidently the idol of the goddess *Kika*, *Kuka*). With the added suffix *-čk*, the root *kiy* forms the word *kička* which in Old Russian dialects meant 'female horned headgear,' 'sheep,' and 'dog.'

The Old Slavic *kiy* meant 'hammer' and 'stick'; a vulgar Russian word for the phallus sounds very much like it. In Slavic languages, words with the root *kuy*, *kiy* mean 'bog,' 'mountain, hill,' 'stream, spring.' The Polish *kuy* ('whirlwind'), Ukrainian *kuyava* for 'hill' and 'dwelling,' and Sumerian *ki* for 'earth' are semantically related to the Black God. The Armenian *hoy* means 'ram horn.' The Chechenian toponym *Kiystæ* meaning 'Kiy country' also seems relevant here.

The word *kuy* as a term pertaining to the Black God is known far beyond the region inhabited by Slavs. In Chinese mythology, Chün-Kuy was the lord of demons, and *Kuy* was a monster bull or dragon, shown painted red; sea, wind, rain, and music were associated with him. *Kuy* is the Chinese for 'stick,' which nearly coincides with the Slavic *kiy* of the same meaning. The ancestors of the Chinese and Slavs were not only separated by vast territorial expanses — several thousand kilometers — but their languages belong to distinct macrofamilies. The similarity of words for 'stick' in these languages (like similar ancient Greek and Chinese names for 'earth', similar German and Burmese names for 'cow,' etc.) indicates that we have here a cult term which passed from people to people together with cult conceptions, irrespective of the languages spoken by these peoples. The words for 'stick' were cult terms because the stick was an attribute of the Black God.

Morphologically and semantically related to this category of words is the form with the second root consonant *r* (*kir*, *kur*, *ker*, *kor*): the Urartuan *kir* ('earth'); Akkadian and Armenian *kir* ('lime,' i.e., "white earth"); Azerbaijanian

kir ('bitumen,' i.e., "black earth"); Akkadian *kir* ('city'); Hebrew *kir* and Turkic *kyr* ('wall'); Ossetian *kur* and Nenetsian *kura* for 'bull'; Breton *caru* ('deer'); Armenian *karr* ('stone'); Persian *kar* ('to engage in witchcraft'); Lithuanian *kera* ('witchcraft, sorcery'); Elamite *kiur* ('deity'); Greek *karte* ('cow'), *kora* ('maiden'), and *kur* ('lord, master'); Latin *caragus* ('sorcerer, magician'), *carda* ('northerly direction'), and *cervus* (*kervus*) for 'deer'; French *carre* ('square'); Arabic *karm* ('wine, vine'); Hebrew *kerem* ('vineyard') and *karmel* ('place overgrown by thick vegetation'); Turkic *kur* ('idol') and *kormos* ('devil'); Sanskrit *kurmā-h* ('tortoise'); Lithuanian *kurmis* ('mole'); Old Prussian *kurwis* ('ox'); Russian *koren* ('root'), *korova* ('cow'), *karavay* ('ritual bread'), and *khorovod* or *korogod* ('dance in a circle'); the names of the rivers *Kura* in Georgia (the Caucasus) and Russia (the Russian city of Kursk is situated on the *Kura* River).

The Etruscan *sacre* ('divine, sacred') consists of the root *k.r* and prefix *sa-* which was analyzed above in combinations of the root-word *b.r*.

The root *k.r* is found in the name of the Sumerian god of thunderstorms and the underworld *Iškur*, who was represented as a bull, a lion, or a warrior in a chariot; the first part of his name, *iš*, means 'man,' and the second part is the Sumerian *kur* for 'mountain' (another name of the same demon is *Mer*, *Imer*, deriving, as pointed out above, from the protoform **b.r*). The Western European name *Karl* or *Carol*, the Slavic *korol* ('king') and *krol*, *krolík* ('rabbit'), and the Christmas *carol* can be traced back to *k.r+l*, i.e., 'god *Kur*.'

The name of the ancient Roman *Quirinus* has been etymologized from **co-vir*, which is supposed to mean 'assembly of men,' but this is an unfounded assumption. To begin with, there is a mythological personage of the same name even in the Georgian tradition: the Georgian *Kviria* is a phallic deity associated alternately with heaven, earth, or water; he administered justice and was supplicated for rain; his festival coincided with Shrovetide/Carnival and also involved contests [371a, p. 631]. This suggests that comparing the name *Quirinus* with the Sabine *quirus* for 'spear' is more justified, as the spear was an attribute of the Black God.

The name of *Charon*, meaning 'old man,' has the root *k'er*. In the Proto-Indo-European vocabulary, **k'er* means 'raven,' **ker* stands for 'horned,' **k'r-no* is 'grain, seed,' **khrmi* is 'worm,' **ghar* is 'nut' [108, pp. 484, 540, 636, 394, 825].

Cronus (*Kronos*) has features pointing to a connection with the pre-Greek Black God. The Carthaginians identified *Cronus* with *Baal*, the Romans with *Saturn*; the Greek feast *Cronia* corresponded to the Roman *Saturnalia*. A comparison between the name *Cronus* and the Greek *keraunos* ('lightning') and Georgian *kronos* ('Saturday') was given earlier in this book. The Korean dragon was named *Kuron'i*, which supports the assumption that this version of the Black God's name was common in ancient times.

According to ancient Greek beliefs, *Ker* was the demon of death, who devoured dead bodies; his name means 'death.' The word is a root in several names in Greek mythology: the *Keres* were female demons responsible for human suffering

and enjoying the sight of battle slaughter; *Kerkion* was an evil, cruel demon; the *Kerkopes* were two brothers, cruel robbers. *Carna* was a goddess of the underworld in ancient Roman mythology. *Kori* was a man-eating bird in *Orochi* (Far East) fairy tales. The *Keremet* of ethnic groups inhabiting the Volga Region (*Chuvashi*, *Marians*, *Udmurtians*) was a "maker of evil." *Kari* was a thundergod and creator of mankind in Malaysian myths [730b, p. 910]. *Karei* in Khmerian mythology was the deity of thunder, who dwelt in a cave and created the world [371a, p. 623]. The name of the ancient Persian king *Kyrash* (*Cyrus*) obviously derives from the name of the god; *kyrios* is the Greek for 'the Lord.'

Nostratic words whose meaning may be semantically connected with the image of the Black God involve root consonants *k.r*: **karā* ('black'), **kara* ('burn, scorch') and 'cliff, steep hill'), and **kor'i* ('sheep, ram, lamb') [210a, pp. 302, 337, 340]. It is possible that **külä* ('community, clan, tribe, family') [210a, p. 362] is also etymologically associated with these.

Kiri meant 'goddess' in the Elamite language. Apparently, due to the alternation *r/l*, the Indian mother goddess became *Kali*. As the Black God was a patron of cities, 'city' is *kala* in Iranian and Turkic languages, in Akkadian it is *kalakku*. The sounds *k*, *h* and *h* in different languages correspond to one another (for example, *kora* and *hora* mean 'bull' in the languages of Northern Eurasia). That is why the category of words in question (with the root *k.r*) are related to those comprising *h.r* and *h.r*, like the Slavic *Hors*, Egyptian *Horus*, Nostratic **horā* ('rise'), etc.

The sound *r* of the root-word *k.r* could pass not only into *l*, but also into *s*, *š*, *č*, and *ž*. The Nostratic **kačā* ('man') [210a, p. 315] and some mythological names and terms of this category are semantically associated with the image of the Black God.

The Christian *St. Kasyan* possesses Black God features. The Hattian moon god was *Kašku*, and the Hurrian was *Kušuh*. This category seems to include the Russian *kuzneč* ('blacksmith'; *kuzn* is an archaic form of this word) and the Proto-Indo-European **kas* ('hare'). The Russian *kozyol* ('he-goat') has the root *k.z*; the word *koža* ('leather') once meant 'goat-skin.' A coat of animal skins, most likely initially goatskins, is called *kožuš* in Russian. It is not accidental that this word coincides with the name of the Hurrian moon god. *Kašmir* is a sacred mountain in Buddhism. The Georgian *kadžī* means 'devil,' the Armenian *Kadžī* is the spirit of storm and thunder, the Ossetian *kaži* is 'demon, underworld spirit.' *Käshot* is a spirit of death in Vietnam. In Avarian (*Daghestan*) is a spirit of death in the shape of a white snake; he is sometimes referred to as "egg-snake" [371a, p. 607]. The chestnut tree (Latin *castanea*, Greek *kastanon*, Armenian *kask*) was dedicated to the Black God. The Turkic *koš* means 'engage in witchcraft, sorcery.' *Khasamili* was the Hattian blacksmith-god. *Katte* is the Hattian for 'king.' *Kodes* was the Adygeian god of the sea; the name means 'holy.' The Hebrew *k.d.š* for 'sacred, holy' seems to have the same associations (there is an opinion, though, that this word originated from 'to detach').

288 See chapter "The Holy Trinity."

This group of words probably also includes the name of a Russian fairy tale demon called *Kašči*. The Black God died only for the duration of the winter, but not irrevocably. In other myths the god of terrestrial fertility dies and rises from the dead; hence *Kašči*'s epithet, "immortal." *Kašči* possessed uncountable riches. The flying serpent was in his service; *Kašči*'s own reptilian nature can be guessed from the allusion that his fate was connected with some mysterious egg. M. Fasmer [543b, p. 362], echoed by V. Ivanov and V. Toporov [371a, p. 629], believes that the name of the Slavic *Kašči* derives from the Turkic *košči* ('slave, prisoner'); this etymology is certainly mistaken.

The root *k.s* is a part of words meaning 'house, home' in various languages: the Bulgarian *kašča*, Rumanian *kasa*, Digorian (Western Ossetia) *kās*, Persian *kad*, Lakian (in *Daghestan*) *katta*, Ukrainian *hata*, and German *Hütte*, as well as names of funeral structures: the Vainakhian *kaš*, Kabardinian-Circassian *kešene*, Turkic *kesene*, Persian *česena*.

The Black God was worshiped by many peoples even in post-Neolithic times. It may therefore be assumed that his name in the form *kas* is the source of ethnonyms such as *Kassit* (a people once inhabiting the western part of what is now Iran); *Kašk* (an Urartuan people); *Kosog* (Adygeian ethnic groups of the Western Caucasus); *Kazak* (some Turkic ethnic groups); and *Kaspi* (who lived in the Southeastern Caucasus in the first millennium B.C.). Hence also may derive *Caucasus* itself, where *kau* means 'place of habitation' (an alternative origin of the word *Caucasus* may be from *kas-kas*, a name used by the Hittites for the people who inhabited the northeastern part of Asia Minor).

The collapse of the Neolithic religion resulted in a shrinking of the Black God. He turned into a wood-goblin, a *mezmän* (water-sprite), or a brownie (house-spirit).

The wood-goblin has horns and goat legs. He travels in the company of wolves (one may feel like asking the "rationalists": on what real-life facts could the image of a he-goat as leader of a wolf pack be based?). The wood-goblin has a liking for vodka. He has fits of laughter; the way to save oneself from him is to make him laugh. One can ransom oneself from his clutches by offering him an egg. He abducts children. He is armed with a cudgel [430, pp. 29-40].

The merman is the lord of waters. For some reason he patronizes bee-keepers. He is a drunkard. He appreciates donations and offerings. Like the wood-goblin, he is pictured with horns and a tail. The wood-goblin and the water-sprite were believed to emerge from stones [430, pp. 50-59].

The brownie also has horns and a tail. He is black, shaggy, and can pose as a dog, snake, cat, or frog. Offerings meant for him were placed on an axe [430, pp. 98, 99].

The image of the devil was especially popular in folk demonology. His popularity cannot be accounted for in terms of Christian piety. There is no image of the devil in Christian canonical literature; this suggests that his origin was pagan. Popular notions about the devil do not conform



Fig. 386. Ear of grain symbol: 1 — fragment of masonry, Daghestan; 2 — Russian wood carving [308, p. 179]; 3 — element of Khevsur (Georgia) ornament [51, pl. 2]; 4 — design on a house wall, Daghestan, Dusrakh; 5 — Bronze Age object, Northern Caucasus [361, p. 133]; 6 — Elam, ca 3000 BC [544, p. 56].

to Church teachings. He undoubtedly once commanded respect, which is attested by the Russian proverb: "Pray to God, but do not anger the devil." Fear of the devil led people to avoid mentioning his name, using various euphemisms instead, like enemy, dog, the Black One, the Evil One, etc.

The devil's image merges in popular conceptions with those of the wood-goblin, water-sprite, and house-spirit. Like them, he is black and furry, with horns and a tail; he may show up as a snake, dog, pig, or fiery serpent [430, pp. 118-131]. The Slavic devil, like the Western European, is a womanizer and visits ladies whom he takes a fancy to, flying to them in the form of a winged serpent [152, pp. 96-97, 322-323]. The devil likes to laugh. He plays musical instruments; a Russian medieval manuscript shows him as a musician and winged, though it is the underworld, rather than heaven, that is his abode (Fig. 387: 3). A graffito in the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral represents the devil as a bestower of rain.

According to Ossetian tradition, people and demons were initially on good terms; people even honored demons, but later quarreled with them [582, p. 52]. This agrees with numerous other data indicating that the devil was not always "the enemy," "the evil one." The devil was once a god. Even the founders of Christianity had the



Fig. 387. Portrayals of Black God: 1 — Western European Paleolithic [703, pl. 85]; 2 — Etruscan [390b, p. 154]; 3 — from a medieval Russian manuscript [94, p. 63].

notion that the devil was also a god, though an adverse one. The Apostle Paul called the devil "the god of this world"; the subsequent two thousand years of Christianity have maintained the notion that the devil not only rules in the underworld, but also effectively influences the course of events in this life. The Czechs still refer to the devil as the Black God [662, pp. 71, 73].

As far back as the Paleolithic, an image of a horned creature emerged which could pass perfectly well for a depiction of the devil (Fig. 383: 4). The Paleolithic has left many images of half-beasts, half-men (Fig. 387: 1). A student of this art can hardly conclude that primitive people made caricatures of their acquaintances for fun. This image became more specific in Classical Antiquity: an Etruscan artist created a portrait of The Black God very like the subsequent Christian visualization of the devil (Fig. 387: 2), with goat horns and a goatee; there are three signs of germinating seeds on his ear, and a second face at the back of the statuette's head expresses the deity's duality.

In a book published in 1918 F. Dölger showed convincingly that the devil is the former pagan underworld god [662, pp. 75, 78, a.o.]. His reasonings have not been taken into account by contemporary students of popular beliefs, who maintain that the devil, the wood-goblin, etc., belong, so to speak, to minor demonology, that they are simply the fruit of ordinary fantasy.

We have discussed names for the Black God which have one root consonant, *k*, or two consonants, *k.r*. Some of his names comprise the stem *k.r* and a suffix. These include, for example, the Iranian *karm* ('worm'), or with the *k* changing into *č*, there are the Russian *červ* ('worm') and *černy* ('black'), Old Russian *čereven* ('red'), and Slavic *čert* ('devil'). The interchange of consonants *k* to *č* also affected other terms dealing with the Black God. The Bulgarian *čur* ('smoke') is related to the Russian *kurit* ('to smoke'). The meaning of the Old Russian *čur* has not been definitely ascertained; some scholars believe it to be, among other things, a euphemism for "devil," "house-spirit," or a name for the deity *čur* [543d, pp. 385, 386]; this group also includes *praščur* ('remote ancestor').

The consonant change from *k* to *č* produces the Celtic Cernunnos and the Latin Ceres.

The Armenian *k'rak* means 'fire.' This word coincides with the mythological personage Krak honored by pagan western Slavs (the founding of the city of Kraków, in

particular, is attributed to him). In one version of the myth the dragon is killed by Jerzy (George), in another by Krak [197, p. 65]. Krak is therefore a serpent fighter. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, the snake fighter is a secondary image which resulted from splitting up the Black God's functions. The crow is sometimes called *krak* in Russia, and in Lithuanian *krākas* means 'dragon.' Kraken is a sea monster in Scandinavian mythology.

Kračni is the Old Slavic for 'blacksmith.' The mythical Kres was, according to Pausanias, an eponym of the name of Crete. The Russian *krasny* ('red') closely resembles the Sanskrit *krśnās* ('black'), which is not surprising, since both black and red were color symbols of the earth god. Krishna in Indian mythology is associated with the rain cloud. He was called "father" and "teacher", pictured as a protector, redeemer, and at the same time there is something evil, sinister about his image; his characteristics include bellicosity, wisdom, and extraordinary virility; women dance in ecstasy to the sounds of his pipe [371b, p. 15]. There is a river called Kirsna in Lithuania.²⁸⁹

Of particular interest in connection with the genesis of the image and name of the devil, is the schema *k.r+t*. Formed in accordance with this schema are the Lithuanian *kūrti* ('to light a fire'), Old Slavic *kuriti* ('exhale smoke'), Scythian *karta* ('sword'), Hebrew *karat* ('destroy'), Ossetian *kurd*, *kuyd* ('blacksmith'), Russian *krot* ('mole', a black animal dwelling in the ground²⁹⁰), and the name of Crete, where the early farmer religion survived until the middle of the second millennium B.C. The German *Schrat* (Old High German *scrato*) has these meanings: 'wood-goblin; worm; butterfly; whirlwind; disease.' The ancient Roman goddess Carda was a forest demon and at the same time a patroness of the household; she was part of the cult of the dead.

As far back as the nineteenth century, the Czech ethnographer K. Erben voiced the opinion that the word *čert* ('devil') derived from the hypothetical proto-Slavic **krt* (incidentally, the Czech for 'house-spirit' is *křet*, the Latvian is *krat*). As reported by A. Afanasiev, the Serbians and Croats have a saying: "We will all go to Kart," in the sense 'We will all die,' as well as the expression "Kartova oblast" ('the world of the dead'). These data were not taken into account by etymological dictionaries of the Russian language: the Slavic *čert* is compared only to the Lithuanian *kyrėti* ('to be angry') and *kerėti* ('to jinx') [543d, p. 347].

S. Tokarev compares the hypothetical proto-Slavic **krt* to the contemporary *kračun*, *koračun*. This word means 'Christmas Eve,' and also 'ritual Christmas bread.' Kerečun was regarded as a deity among the Carpathian Rusines [489b, p. 30]; in Russian dialects it is an evil spirit or death. "All this suggests," concludes Tokarev, "that Koračun was seen by some Slavic tribes as a deity of winter and of death" [521, p. 109]. We can now see that Koračun—Kart—Čert was honored not only by some Slavic tribes, that he was not only a god of death, and

²⁸⁹ Was the deity's name with the root *k.r* an eponym for a number of Daghestan toponyms, such as Kara, Karakh, Kurag, Kurush, Koreish?

²⁹⁰ As reported by Pliny, sorcerers "had more respect for the mole than for other animals" and believed that it possessed prophetic gifts [240, p. 191].

that he had nothing to do with controlling the winter (on the contrary, he fell asleep for the duration of the winter, and the festival in his honor, which merged with the Indo-European feast of "the birth of the new sun," and later became the festival of the birth of Christ, marked his "departure" for the winter season).

The similar sound of the Western Slavic *Kart* and the Georgian ethnonym *Kart* does not appear to be fortuitous. An eleventh century chronicle entitled *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (The History of Georgia) names Kartlos as a forefather of the Georgian people. This must be the same Kart extending beyond Slavic mythology. Some ancestors of the Georgians once migrated to the Caucasus from Asia Minor, where, according to ancient evidence, the Karduchi people lived (incidentally, the affix *hi* is quite common in Daghestanian toponymy). If Kart was the Black God, there might be a feminine parallel to the name — *Karta; and indeed, Karta was the goddess of fate in Latvian mythology (this function belonged to the Great Goddess and was then personified separately, as follows from Classical mythology).

In the chapter "Bull-Moon" we gave examples of names and terms comprising the root *k.r+s.r*, *š.r*, and *č.r*, which have a bearing on the Black God. On the other hand, *č.r* is associated with *k.r*. So it is most likely that *k.r* stems from **k.r* which, alongside **b.r*, is thus one of the oldest names for the Black God. The French pronunciation of the name Karl, Charles, supports the assumption that the words *korol* ('king') and *čar* ('tsar') are etymologically related, *korol* deriving from *k.r+s.r* and *čar* from *s.r+t.r*.

It is not clear whether **b.r* and **k.r* were originally related. These forms produce a number of variants which are morphologically similar and belong semantically to the same sphere of notions. In the chapter "Earth, Mountain, and the Magic Net" we presented data which showed that many names and terms associated with the Black God have the root *m.r*, *p.r*, *f.r*, *p.l*, *ph.l*, *v.r*, or *v.l*, which may go back to the initial **b.r*. Similarly, **k.r* produced the phonetic variants *s.r*, *š.r*, *č.r*, *k.r*, *k.l*, *g.r*, *g.l*, *h.r*, and *h.r* in the course of linguistic evolution.

According to a popular definition, Charon (Haron) was a personage in Greek myth who ferried the souls of the dead across the Styx, but in some legends he was a demon who stole people's souls, or the lord of the underworld himself. The Etruscans portrayed Charon with animal ears and long fangs; they also had a demon called Charu who guided the deceased to the world of the dead or was a death deity who killed his victims with a hammer blow. Cheiron in Greek myth was a centaur endowed with wisdom and the art of healing (it is of interest that the root of his name coincides with the Greek *heir* for 'hand'). In contemporary Greek traditions Charos is a demon in the image of a black bird or a winged rider. Choron was a deity of the underworld in western Semitic myths. The Graces were called Charites in Ancient Greece (these three goddesses were a modification of the more archaic image of the triple goddess). Charis was the daughter of Zeus and Hera; this word was also one of Aphrodite's names. In Ancient India the solar horses were called Charites. The beautiful winged maidens of Indian legends bear the same name, and Chariti was the name of the female demon who devoured children

(this reflected the dual attitude towards the Great Goddess who could be evil and good, and beautiful and ugly). In Slavic languages, *hort* (*kurtas* in the Lithuanian) is a 'greyhound'; greyhounds or wolves accompanied the "wild hunter" (i.e., the underworld god) who pursued the sun deer. It is assumed that the Slavs used the word *hort* also for 'wolf' [475, p. 184]. This word is not confined to Indo-European or even to Nostratic languages: **hwar* meant 'dog' in the proto-Nakhian-Daghestanian language. The linguistically reconstructible Proto-Indo-European appellation for the bear is **hortk* (the Hittite *hartagga*, Latin *ursus*, and Greek *arktos*); the Scythian *arša* ('man, male') is most probably etymologically connected with it. In Slavic legends, Gorokh (Horokh in the old pronunciation) was a mythical king who lived very long ago; he was also a hero who fought the serpent. Greek Hera was a goddess

with some features resembling those of the pre-Greek heaven goddess. Hor (Horus or Horos) was the Egyptian heaven god. Heracles (or Herilus) is a hero of Greek myth. Popular with the Etruscans was the cult of a deity named Hercle. Eros was the Greek god of love, while Herovit or Yarovit was a Slavic rider god honored in spring.

A. Afanasiev noted the presence of the word *k'rt*, meaning 'fire,' in the vocabulary of western Slavs [40c, pp. 760, 761]; *kres* is the Old Slavic for 'fire' [40a, p. 97; 176, p. 15]. It appears that *kart* and *kres* have identical meanings: both meant 'fire.' Also *Kart* is the name of the Black God, and the word *krest* ('cross'), the name of the symbol which was an emblem of the Black God, derived from *kres*. Thus, the cross sign is after all originally connected with the notion 'fire.' However, this is not because it was a picture of an implement for producing flame, but because it was an emblem of the god personified by fire.

THE WHITE GOD

A 12th century German author, Helmold, reported that the Slavs worshiped two major gods: "They expected happiness from one and misfortune from the other, and they called the latter Chernobog (Blackgod) and the former Belbog (Whitegod)" [500, p. 12]. When people feasted, a chalice was passed around and words were pronounced over it in honor of both the good and the evil gods, since one's destiny was believed to depend on both of them [40a, p. 92]. According to an 11th century Russian manuscript, the volkhves (Slavic magi) were convinced that "there were two gods: one in heaven and the other in hell" [40a, p. 93].

A. Afanasiev explains this duality in the following way: "Primitive peoples had the notion that darkness and cold, hostile to the deities of light and warmth, were produced by a different powerful force — evil and destructive. This dual perception of the world by the Slavs found expression in the worship of Belbog and Chernobog, representatives of light and of darkness" [40a, pp. 91, 92]. However, there are no signs of such dualism in the elements of European and Western Asian paganism, which may be considered as going back to the Neolithic. The notion of two opposite deities, good (luminous) and evil (dark) did not start to take shape until the second millennium B.C.

Helmold's account is the only evidence that the Slavs may have worshiped Belbog. Slavic sources never refer to a deity of that name, though A. Famintsyn suggests that toponymy may serve as such evidence [541, p. 141]. Neither is the term "White God" detectable in data on the cults, mythology, rites, and beliefs of other peoples and cultures. Note that Helmold refers to "Belbog" rather than "Bely Bog" (White God). It is quite possible that the name Belbog was originally none other than Vel-god. It is true that unlike Velnias or Bel, Belbog is represented as a benevolent being; this, however, may be accounted for as a revision of the heavenly manifestation of the archaic god *Vel.

The Belorussians remembered a mythical being named Bel as recently as the nineteenth century. Famintsyn, giving this information [541, p. 141], believes that this is the White God; yet the name corresponds to the Semitic Bel, Balu, and Baal with the Black God as a prototype.

It was pointed out in the preceding chapter that the Slavic word *bely* ('white') can be traced back to names and terms associated with deities of the Neolithic religion. The Proto-Indo-European words **ablu* ('apple') and **albho* ('white') are etymologically related [543d, p. 539]; but the apple is an attribute of the Black God, so that the notion 'white' must be originally associated with the image of this deity. Further, the Phoenician *alef* ('bull') is apparently akin to the Latin *albens* ('white').

There is yet another example illustrating the connection between the Black god's name *v.l/b.l* and the notion "white." The Slavic word *bely* is congeneric to *belene* (henbane), common in various Indo-European languages. There is nothing white about this plant. But, consumed by man, it poisons and causes excitement, hallucinations, and delirium. This property probably led to the plant's association with the Great Goddess and Great God. Indeed, Apollo, who will later be shown as a transformed Black God, was sometimes called *Belenos*.

The Slavic *bely* is considered to be related to the Sanskrit *bhati* ('shine') and *bhālam* ('glitter'). But since the Black God was fiery, he could shine and glitter. It is not surprising that the Slavic word for white is etymologically related to the Old Icelandic *bál* ('fire'), Lithuanian *balā* ('bog'), and Latin *belua* ('monster'), while Greek *phalos*, *phalios* for 'white' [543a, p. 149] nearly coincide with the Greek *phallos*.

Russian expressions such as "white day" and "in the white of day" (in broad daylight) point to a connection between the notions 'white' and 'light.' It may be concluded from all this that the name of the fiery (and therefore radiating light) underworld god, who rose to the sky and replaced the heaven goddess there, became the name of

the color white which until then had been associated with the heaven goddess.

Light was an attribute not only of fire, but also of day, of the daytime sky, and as religious conceptions underwent transformation, it came to be associated with the beneficent heaven god opposed to the demon of darkness and evil. We will therefore adopt the term "White God" as a conventional designation of a male deity representing heaven and daylight and opposed to the deity representing the underworld and darkness. In this context one is justified in speaking of the Slavic White and Black gods. Corresponding to this pair are the Latin Jupiter and Dispter, and the Greek Zeus and Pluto (Hades). The Russian volkhves obviously had two such gods in mind, residing "above" and "beneath," rather than good and evil gods. Judging by available evidence, these two gods originated from the two aspects of the Neolithic Black God who generally dwelled in the earth's interior, but could also rise to heaven. The heaven god was once the underworld god, so the heaven god in Japanese and Sumerian mythologies was pictured as a snake [371a, p. 74]. Preceding chapters presented data showing that the archaic Great God had two manifestations: earthly and heavenly.

The mythicized horse was initially an underworld creature which rose to heaven. When people began to ride, a corresponding image of the mythical rider appeared. When the underworld god turned into the heaven god, his horse was pictured white. The white horse was often an attribute of the good god in Indo-European and Caucasian mythologies. Baltic Slavs kept sacred horses whose neighing was interpreted by the priests as the will of the gods [351, p. 197]. Sūriya (the sun) in the Rig-Veda is identified with a white horse [778b, p. 653]. The Croats saw the sun as a young warrior on a white horse; the Serbians also pictured the sun as riding white horses [759, p. 95]. The white horse was honored in England until the twentieth century, though the reason had long been forgotten [864]. Since the white horse represented a deity venerated as an opponent of evil, a custom arose and persisted until quite recently for a person accorded particular esteem, or a victor, to ride a white horse.

The fact that the original two-fold Great God had split into two was commemorated in the course of time in legends which referred to the gods of the underworld and of heaven as former friends or brothers. The Vainakhian supreme god Dāla who resided in heaven was an "older brother" of the god of lightning Seli. In Finno-Ugric mythology, the heaven god Yumo drove his "younger brother" Keremet out of heaven. An Akkadian myth has it that the snake and the eagle, now antagonists, used to be friends in the past [371b, p. 259]. That the two forms of the single Black God, the "upper" and the "lower," evolved into two different deities, is indicated, in particular, by the fact that elevations and lowlands were associated with two deities, both of which had characteristics of the Black God. For example, in Kiev, the upper part of the town was associated with Perun, and the lower with Veles; the Carpathian Mountains were apparently associated by western Slavs with Krak and the plain of Volyn with Veles [197, p. 65]. Some linguistic data indicate that the genesis of the

heaven god who became the one and only true god in monotheistic religions can be traced back to the former twofold deity whose main residence was the underworld. Here are a few examples.

In the Ukraine, the word *bog* ('god') is a euphemism for devil [543a, p. 182]. The Turkic *donguz* ('pig,' an animal of the earth god) coincides with the Lithuanian *dangus* ('heaven'). The Armenian *asiva* for 'god' is etymologically related to *asva*, *aspa* ('horse'; the horse represented the lord of the underworld). The Germanic *god* nearly coincides with Gadh or Gade, the name of the ancient Semitic deity to whom the he-goat was dedicated [730a, p. 620]. See also the ancient Slavic *gad* ('snake'), Sumerian *gud* ('bull'), Armenian *gady* ('cat'), and Proto-Indo-European **gd* ('earth') [108, p. 527]. Belonging in this category seem to be Hebrew words semantically associated with the image of the Black God, such as *gedi* ('kid'), *gadol* ('great'), *gadel* ('growing, ripening'), *god* ('sack made of animal skin'), and *gad* ('fate, destiny').

The name of the ancient Egyptian heaven god Hor (Horus) has a root identical to that of the Hurrian divine bull (i.e., the earth god) Hurri. The Chuvashian *ture* ('god') derived from the name for the bull; it cannot be ruled out that this was also the origin of the Slavic word *bog* ('god') which, it appears, must be etymologically related to the Slavic *byk* ('bull'). In Phrygia, Zeus was called Bagaio, but, as will be shown in the following, Zeus originated from the heavenly form of the Black God. Two rivers (rivers were associated with the earth deity) in Eastern Europe bear the name Bug; it is of interest that one of them was formerly called Bog [543a, p. 228]. It is assumed [543a, p. 181] that the Slavic *bog* originated from the Iranian *baga* ('god') initially believed to have meant 'bestowing, donating.' However, the semantic transition could have proceeded in the opposite direction. Incidentally, the Sogdian (an Iranian language) *Bg* is a specialized wedding deity [371b, p. 156], and the Black God was a patron of marriage. Now take the English word *bog* (marsh is one of the places where the Black God dwells). Buga is a heaven god in Eastern Siberia, and a *bugbear* is a bogeyman. The English *bogey* is a specter, phantom; the Welsh *bwg* means 'ghost' and 'something inspiring fear.'

The essence of the Most High is inscrutable, for man is capable of comprehending things only in terms of notions and images intelligible to him. Even now people imagine God mostly in terms of their everyday experience. In particular, in the time of Moses people could not assimilate Revelation outside their accustomed notions, so they attributed the material characteristics and forms of their customary deity to the intangible and omnipresent divine spirit. The Judaic Yahweh or Yehowah (Yhwh) possesses spirit. He is features of the early farmers' Black God in heaven. He is terrible in rage, he reveals himself as fire (Deuteronomy refers to Yhwh as "all-consuming fire"), as a whirlwind, thunder and lightning, he pours down rain. The serpent and a golden calf, sometimes stone, his idols. Saturday is his holy day. Human sacrifice was offered to him (Samuel is his holy day). Human sacrifice was offered to him (Samuel is his holy day). Hacked the imprisoned king Agag to pieces in front of Yhwh's altar; Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac to him).

Jewish prayers refer to the Most High as "His sacred

mountain." Mount Sinai, where God revealed Himself to Moses, is not meant by this. God allegorically refers to the terrestrial world as "My holy mountain" (Isaiah, 11: 9); this reflects the archaic notion of the mountain in which the Neolithic "Lord of the earth" dwelt.

According to an ancient Jewish tradition, when God appears before people on the Day of Judgement, He will wear red. This is interpreted as the blood of massacred innocent Jews, whose torment will be requited by the Most High. But we know that red was a symbol of the Neolithic Great God.

These are the words of the Sea Song, "Yhwh, the man of war, Yhwh is his name" (Exodus 15: 3). Yhwh is a dangerous god; many passages in Scriptures show how dangerous he can be. When the Israelites recaptured the Holy Ark from the Philistines, all who had looked upon the holy object were put to death by God, and Uzah, who seized the Ark to keep it from falling, was killed by God instantly. Two of the high priest Aaron's sons were immediately destroyed by Yhwh's fire when they lit the wrong incense at the sacred flame. The ambivalent ideas of the Neolithic Great God were transposed onto Yhwh: he is sometimes called "merciful," sometimes "terrible" (*norá*). As he was dangerous, his name was taboo, as the Greeks avoided mentioning the name of Hades, the Adygeians Sible, and the Slavs Veles.

As can be understood from the Scriptures, the ancient Hebrews, even those who worshiped Yhwh, persisted in worshipping the bull. Yhwh's altars were decorated with bull horns, like the Cretan horned altars. The epithet "bull" is applied to Yhwh several times in the Scriptures. Judging by materials from the first millennium B.C., Yhwh was also imagined, and sometimes portrayed, as a lion. The ancient Hebrews preserved survivals of the Black God cult, such as ritual ablutions, lighting fires, celebrating the new moon, venerating mountains, oak trees and springs, interring the dead in caves, and using wine and eggs for cult rituals. They burned incense in honor of Yhwh and poured libations in honor of the "queen of heaven." The Jews who settled in Elephantine, Egypt, after the destruction of the First Temple, worshiped Yahu and his spouse Anath.

The ancient Hebrews used the customary name of the supreme deity for the Most High. In the chapter "The Sacred Ram" we discussed the etymology of the name Eliahu as a combination of the Nostratic **h₁al* ('burning, scorching') and the Hebrew *hu* ('he'); an alternative etymology can be suggested: **el-yahu*, i.e., 'god Yhwh.' The name Yhwh is a variant of the ancient Western Semitic name for 'god': Yhwu, Yahu, Yaw [730b, p. 1702]. This name is recorded in ancient Hebrew proper names that begin with *Yeho*. The Hebrew language still has the word *yah* as an appellation for God. This seems to have been the initial name. In combination with the suffix *-hu* ('he') it produced the forms Yahu, Yhwh, etc. In fact, there are two versions of the ending of ancient Hebrew proper names: *-yah* and *-yahu*.

The Ugarito-Phoenician Yewo (Yw) is identified with Yammu in some texts, while in others he engages in battle with the latter; his wife is Anath [371a, p. 597] who in other versions of the myth was the spouse of Bel/Baal. Yah means 'moon' in the language of ancient Egyptians;

Iahu is an epithet of Seth, Horus, and Bel; it was a title of the pharaohs. Iacchus is a form of the name Bacchus [730a, p. 496]. The name of the ancient Hebrew Yah seems to be a variant of the paleo-Semitic Au which is identified with the Akkadian Ea (Hea). Ea was a heaven god, though the epithets "lord of the earth," "lord of rivers and springs," "god of depths," and "the singer" were applied to him; he assumed the image of the snake. Perhaps it is not mere coincidence, but because of their common origin, that his name sounds like the Sumerian sacred name of the moon and water, A, the ancient Egyptian Ah, the name of the Sumerian moon goddess Aa, and the Estonian thundergod Ai [730a, pp. 9, 51, 54]. The Hattian *yah* means 'glittering sky.' Yahu is an Old Turkish name of God, other Turkic forms of the name are Aha, Ihe, and so on [370, p. 145]. K. Kadyradzhiev traces these words to the protoform **ine*, which he associates with the Sumerian *án* ('sovereign') and Komi (in the Urals) *án* ('god'), proto-Finnish **inma* ('god'), Yakutian *yaar* ('sacred'), Kassitian *yansi* ('king'), and Altaian *yanar* ('god's envoy, prophet') and *yang* ('power, faith, soul') [370, p. 134]. Variants of the terms with nasal consonant may have come from the name of the Black God Yima, Yama, Yam.²⁹¹

No less suggestive is the origin of the Indo-European heaven god. Students of mythology are unanimous in regarding *devá*, *deus*, *theós* as the original Indo-European names for god. These words are believed to go back to *div* ('shine') and to the related words for 'heaven' and 'day'; V. Ivanov points out that the Proto-Indo-European **i₂eu* ('god') is etymologically connected with **i₂iu* ('day, heaven') and with **i₂ei* ('shine') [108, pp. 475, 791]. But let us look into other parallels. Evolving from the root *div* are the Latin *dives* ('rich') and *divino* ('predict'), and it was the Black God who was considered both wealthy and prophetic. It is with the same *div* that the name of the Roman underworld god Dis is connected. Like the Roman, the Celtic Dis Pater had chthonic features and possessed other characteristics of the Black God as patron of wealth and fertility and progenitor of mankind. Moreover, the Hebrew *dov* — bear, which represented the deity of caves, the underground, and darkness in ancient beliefs, strikingly resembles the prototype of the name of the god of heaven and of light, *div*.

The Celtic word for 'fire,' *tein*, corresponds to the Proto-Indo-European **i₂en*. Logically, the word for 'fire' cannot derive from the word for 'shine'; the notion 'fire' was certainly primary. But fire is an attribute of the underworld. The Scandinavian Tiw was not even a heaven god, he was a god of warfare.

The pagan Teutons' name for 'god,' Tiw, Tiu, Tyr, which is related to the Indo-European name of god, *devá*, *deus*, *theós*, can be compared with the name of the Etruscan moon god Tiv and, finally, with **i₂r*, which must be a protoform of all these terms and names.

²⁹¹ All this certainly does not mean that, as K. Kadyradzhiev tries to convince us, the Turki were in the beginning. In his opinion, the territory of contemporary Turkey was inhabited during the Neolithic by paleo-Turki (he attributes the Hacilar and Çatal-Hüyük cultures to them), who spread the light of culture from there westwards (Troy, Crete, the Balkans, the Danube region) and eastwards (Sumer, Ancient India, Scythia, the Altai, Japan).

A mythical creature named Div, Diva, hostile to Christians, is known in Slavic traditions. The Slavs also had a goddess Diva or Ziva, who possessed features of the Neolithic Great Goddess (Diva is the feminine form of Div). It can be concluded from this that Div was the name for the Neolithic Great God.

Evil spirits of Iranian mythology, called *daevas*, display features of the Black God: they dwell in the earth's interior, inside mountains, at the bottom of lakes, they guard the treasures of the earth — precious metals and stones; they cause earthquakes and devour people. The Vedic heaven god Dyaus was pictured as a bull; he was the father and consort of the goddess of the rising sun Ušas. These characteristics of Dyaus indicate that he was the former underworld god. In the Romany language (an Indic language of the Gypsies), *devil* means 'god'; this is not a joke or a chance coincidence: the names for the devil and for the god have a common origin.

Judging by the above names for god in Indo-European languages, the sound *v* in some of them is not part of the root, since in other names *s*, which is the ending, corresponds to it; there is no second consonant at all in the protoform **i₂ieu*. **Da* or *de*, which forms words with the meaning 'father,' 'fire,' and 'earth' in different languages, must be considered the root of the word. The sacred snake in Dahomey is called Da [730a, p. 403]. There is a river called Da in Vietnam; it is remarkable that this is a rapid and unpredictable river, like the Black God; its name means 'black.'

The Proto-Indo-European appellation for earth is **d(h)eg(h)*, **d(h)eg(h)om* [108, pp. 536, 821]; in Turkic languages, *dag* means 'mountain' (the earth god lives inside a mountain); *dag* is the Hebrew for 'fish' (the earth god was also a god of earthly waters). In the Sumerian language, *dingir* stands for 'god' (in the heaven-god sense); the diphthong *ng* is a nasal *g*, so it may be assumed that the protoform of this word was **d.g*.

Di means 'earth' in Chinese. The Chinese used this word to designate the Europoid tribes who invaded China in the second millennium B.C.; it is possible that the eponym of this ethnonym was a similar sounding name of an earth deity presumably worshiped by these tribes. The Siberian Kets call themselves *Di*. A people referred to as *Dai* once lived in Daghestan. It was pointed out above that the first syllable of the Greek word *daimona* ('demon'), *dai-*, could have a meaning associated with the image of the Black God. In Japan Daikoku is a god of wealth. In Chinese legends Tai is the name of a culture hero. Tai-i ("the great and only one") is the Chinese heaven god. Tai-Shan ("the great mountain") is a sacred mountain in Chinese mythology (it had chthonic connotations and at the same time was considered to favor conception). Tae is a female deity of the "upper world" in the mythology of the Tukuna Indians (South America). Tait (i.e., *dai-t*) was the goddess of weaving in Ancient Egypt.

Indo-European words for 'heaven' and 'light' and the corresponding names of the god of heaven and light, are not confined etymologically to Indo-European languages and can be traced back to the terminology of the early farmers' religion. Indeed, the Slavic *diy*, Celtic *diu*, Latin *dies*, Greek *theós*, and Germanic *tius* can be compared

(if the endings *-es*, *-os*, and *-us* are dropped) with the Sumerian *ti(r)*, which meant 'arrow' and 'life'; this word is associated with the image of the Black God.

There are also other analogies to the Indo-European *dios* and *theós* in non-Indo-European languages: the Adygeyan *th'a*, Hattian *tuh*, Elamite *tir*, Dravidic *tiru* [370, p. 132], and Vainakhian *d'ela*, *däla*. This list of variants of the name of the White/Black God can most probably be supplemented by the name of the major god of the Etruscan pantheon Tinia or Tin, characterized by Etruscan texts as "the one possessing three types of lightning." This name can in turn be compared to the name of the Greek spirit of death Thanatos, to the name of the Iranian Tanata, Carthaginian Tanit or Tinit, referred to as "the heavenly maiden" and "great mother" and represented as a winged woman with a disk in her hands, and to non-Indo-European words expressing the notions 'god' and 'heaven,' such as the Chinese *tien*, *tian*, Turko-Mongolian *tengri*, and Sumerian *dingir*. The Chinese Tien-kon is a mythical dog, the Japanese Tengu is the mountain spirit, a bestower of rain dressed in red and seen as lightning [730b, p. 1545].

The Sumerian *tingir* ('river') points to the pre-Indo-European origin of the Iranian *don*, *danu* ('river, stream'). Donar was the Teutonic god of thunder, storm, and fertility, corresponding to the Scandinavian Thor. Triton was a Greek sea deity. In Indian mythology, Danu was the mother of the serpent Vritra. In Irish mythology, Don, Donus, Danu, or Anu was a heaven goddess and the first mother, the spouse of the underworld god. The Spanish *don* and Hebrew *adon* for 'mister' derive from these names.

The transition from *Danu* to *Anu* took place not only among the Celts. The Sumerian heaven god was named An; similar is the name of the Japanese devil Oni, who inflicted misfortune and disease, and represented, like ancient Oriental deities, with horns and three eyes. Like many other mythological personages related to the former Black God, Oni was not devoid of comic features.

All this suggests that both the name and the nature of the heaven god as pictured by Indo-Europeans, Semites, and other Eurasian peoples, are connected with the early farmer ethnic environment, and that the heavenly Black God was their initial source.

The image of the heaven god typical of Indo-European mythology emerged either through transformations of the heavenly manifestation of the Neolithic Black God, which assimilated features of the Neolithic heaven goddess, or through its merging with the Proto-Indo-European heaven god, if he really existed.

This second stage of evolution of the initial concepts of the Great God was followed by a third stage, during which the two gods, the upper and the lower, did not merely divide the universe between themselves, but became antagonists. Plutarch wrote: "Some people adhere to the opinion, like the magi of Zoroaster, that there are two gods who are at war with each other; one of them is the creator of good, the other of evil; the good one is called *theós*, the evil one *daimona*" [662, p. 72].

Finally, in the fourth stage, the heaven god came to be regarded as the true god, whereas the lord of the underworld, opposing light and goodness, was no longer looked upon as a god, but as "the evil one." This approach was

assimilated by Christianity which adopted ■ irreconcilable attitude towards the anti-god. It should be added that this concept did not emerge initially as a result of the comprehension of good and evil. The struggle of the god or of the hero with the monster, recounted in myths, legends, and fairy tales, expresses the idea of opposition, not between good and evil, but between useful and harmful, and also, which is essential for understanding the basis of the opposition, between "one's own" and "alien." Myths about ■ deity or hero combatting ■ monster describe collisions between gods of different religions, those characteristic of the Neolithic and of the Bronze Age. They probably reflect the ideological struggle which accompanied armed struggle between different ethnic groups: early farming tribes, on the one hand, and Indo-Europeans, proto-Caucasians, and Semites, on the other. This struggle resulted in the disappearance of the early-farming ethnic (more accurately, of a group of ethnics that inhabited the territory from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to Hindustan in the east), and of their culture and religion.

The Vedic Varuna does not demand piety, he demands worship and threatens punishment not for unworthy treatment of people, but for deviation from the true faith. There were no moral categories in pagan religions. The useful was good and the harmful was evil. "The evil force" could be "good" if it was useful. Irrespective of the character of supernatural forces, they were respected for their power.

Moral concepts, the notion of sin, took shape in the second half of the second millennium B.C., when Moses pronounced the Ten Commandments. Later, in the first millennium B.C., peoples of Western Asia and Europe formed the concept of a good god who was at the same time a "radiant god." A whole sequence of deities personified light and virtue in Indo-European mythology. They include 1) the god of heaven, 2) the god of the sun, 3) the god of spring, 4) the god of thunder, and 5) the serpent-fighting god. Taking advantage of the fact that the Slavic Belbog is rather vague, and the information available on him scanty, we will use his name as a common name for these deities. The notion of the White God will thus be collective. Various deities here analyzed under this designation are united by the fact that they personify light and virtue and by their antagonism to the Black God. They have other features in common as well, though there are also differences. All of them are associated with white, symbolizing light and probably virtue. All are male.

Let us discuss a number of ancient deities who fit into this category — the heaven god, sun god, spring god, thundergod, and serpent-fighting god.

1. *The heaven god.* Indo-European myths recorded in the Rig-Veda, in Hittite texts, in the literature of Classical Antiquity, and in myths that can be reconstructed from data in ancient and medieval sources, contain nothing to point explicitly to a common Proto-Indo-European origin. Corresponding myths and cult forms can be seen as a tradition inherited from the period of dispersion of ancient Indo-European tribes, because they, on examination, turn out to be modified, or unmodified, elements of the religion of pre-Indo-European populations absorbed by Indo-Eu-

ropean peoples. Accordingly, the Indo-European heaven god, to judge by the data, is of pre-Indo-European, early farming, Neolithic origin.

The sky radiates light, even before sunrise and after sunset. For that reason the sky, and not the sun, was regarded as the source of light in the religion of early farming tribes. As stated in Genesis, God created light before He made the heavenly bodies. Likewise, the Indo-European heaven god was imagined as a bestower of light, creator of the day. Words for 'god,' 'heaven,' 'light,' and 'day' are etymologically related in Indo-European languages. The Sanskrit *devas*, *deva*, Latin *deus*, Greek *theós*, and Lithuanian *diēvas* meaning 'god' are related to the Latin *dies* ('day') and Sanskrit *dyaus*, *dyah* ('heaven'). Deriving from their root *div* ('shine') are the Sanskrit *diva*, Armenian *tiv*, Latin *dies*, Celtic *diu*, *dia*, English *day*, Lithuanian *dēva*, and Russian *den*. Etymologically related to these words are the names of some Indo-European gods, such as the Vedic Dyaus, Greek Zeus or Deus, Hittite Siu, Lydian Ziva, Germanic Zio, Ziu, Tiu, Anglo-Saxon Tiw, Celtic Duv, and Slavic Diy.

Little is known of the nature and functions of the Proto-Indo-European *Dhws, *Dewas, or *Deiws (these are hypothetical reconstructions of his name [780, p. 39]). He was the god of heaven and daylight; besides, he was the father of other gods, the formula "God the Father" applied to him, such as the Latin Jove-piter or Dies-piter, Greek Zeus-pater, and Indian Dyaus-pitar. No myth or other information is available about his character or deeds. The Vedic Dyaus, like the Lithuanian Diewas or the heaven god vaguely mentioned in some Siberian legends, was the father of the sun. This idea could be connected with specifically Proto-Indo-European beliefs, or, on the other hand, could reflect the Neolithic conception that the deity of the sun was born to the heaven goddess and the earth god (who, rising to heaven, also became a heaven god). It has been mentioned that Dyaus is called "bull" in the Rig-Veda [671, p. 76]; besides, he is armed with ■ cudgel, an attribute of the Black God.

The Rig-Veda attaches much more significance to Varuna and Mitrá, the bearers of light in both the literal and figurative senses of the word. Varuna was the creator and supreme ruler of the world; he dwelled in heaven. Varuna is sometimes called three-eyed, recalling three-eyed Neolithic idols (Fig. 301: 4). An ancient Indian legend relates that Varuna locked Súryah (i.e., the sun) in a fiery castle situated in the west [739, p. 278]; this characterizes him as the Neolithic underworld god. Varuna was armed with a stone [829a, p. 565], ■ attribute of the Neolithic earth god. The "westerly wind" and the "west" were associated with Varuna. The following words in the Rig-Veda addressed to Varuna are noteworthy: "You cause the sky to pour rain" [778b, p. 549]; this was ■ function of the Neolithic god-serpent. In post-Vedic times, Varuna became a deity of the sea [755, p. 17]; it appears that his image was at that period still associated with that of the Black God, the lord of "the lower waters." Varuna's name is explained as 'truthful words, oath,' though it would be ■ a good idea to check this critically; ■ comparison

of his name with that of the Greek Uranus, who kept his children locked in the underworld,²⁹³ seems more meaningful. The names *Varuna*, *Uranus*, and *Orion* probably derive from the word for 'fire' (cf. the Hebrew 'or, 'wr).²⁹⁴ Varuna and Mitrá are a stable pair, not infrequently pictured as an integral being (the Neolithic earth god was considered twofold). Similarly, Mithra is mentioned together with Ahura in the Avesta.

The Roman Jupiter was ■ heaven god, the lord of the world save for its underground part, and the creator of thunder. He was offered white sacrificial animals, his priests wore white headgear, a ritual white horse was stabled at his temple, he himself drove ■ white quadriga. This connection between Jupiter as heaven god, and white, may be seen as due to the color symbol of the archaic heaven goddess being transferred to him. One of his names was Jupiter-stone [829a, p. 476]; one of the oldest Roman sacred objects was ■ "thunderstone" regarded as Jupiter's symbol. This points to his connection with the Black God, the stone being one of the latter's attributes. Jupiter's face on sculptures was painted red on feast days [273, p. 196]. Like the Greek Dionysus/Bacchus, Jupiter was offered wine as ■ sacrifice. The similarity of the forms of the names Jovpiter and Dispiter is significant; it seems that these two Roman deities are the former manifestations of the Black God present in earth and in heaven.

No less significant is the origin of Zeus. According to some myths, he was reared by ■ pig, according to others by a dog or a she-goat mother surrogate [787, p. 467]; but the hog, the he-goat, and the dog were the Black God's animals. Zeus himself turned into ■ bull, a serpent, or a wolf. Myths represent him as dissolute, quarrelsome, and cruel; these characteristics also recall the Black God. Areias was one of his epithets; this must be the same as Ares, the god of war, as the underworld god was pictured. Athene sprang from Zeus' head when Hephaestus split it with a hammer; this may refer to an earlier version of the myth in which the sun rose from the earth through a crack. Let us mention yet another interesting characteristic which illustrates the origin of Zeus: according to one myth, Prometheus knew the secret on which Zeus' life depended; in the Russian tale about Kašči the Immortal, there is ■ secret on which Kašči's life depends.

The name *Zeus* was used in Ancient Greece for various local gods with dissimilar characteristics: in Crete, Zeus was venerated in the image of a bull, a classical text tells of worshipping Zeus-Bacchus, and in Dodona, an "underground Zeus" was worshiped [201, p. 3]. The typical characteristic of Zeus as ■ thunderer does not prove his Indo-European origin: many mythological personages among different peoples, deriving from the image of the Neolithic Black God, also created thunderstorms. Even Zeus' name is pre-Indo-European in origin.

²⁹³In terms of this criterion, Uranus originated from the Neolithic underworld god. Orion or Urion, which is the name of the giant hunter in Greek myths, resembles the name of Uranus. According to other myths, Orion is close to the image of the wonderful deer (he pursued the goddess of dawn with his love and was struck by an arrow in punishment).

²⁹⁴From this name of the Black God the names for his offspring derived: the Proto-Indo-European *ar-en ('ram'), Sanskrit *urana*, and Latin *ariēs* ('lamb').

The German Ziu, English Tiw, Norwegian Tyr, Celtic Duv, and Slavic Diy are known only by their names. One feature some of them manifest is bellicosity. They can be classified as gods of heaven and light only on the basis of their names. The Scandinavian Odin or Wotan cannot be considered a heaven god, though (according to an obviously later version) Yörd, the earth, was his wife.

Phrases in a Russian manuscript, such as "the sun-king, Svarog's son" are insufficient evidence for placing Svarog in the category of heaven gods. It is more justifiable, as was shown above, to associate him with the Black God. It is true that he could have become a heaven god like Varuna, Zeus, or Jupiter, in the heavenly form of the Black God evolving as ■ separate deity.

Consequently, the personage in Indo-European mythologies, who is believed to be ■ heaven god, evidently derives from the heavenly manifestation of the pre-Indo-European earth god.

II. *The sun god* is another variety of the White God.

In the museum of the Daghestanian village of Akhty, there is a feminine effigy of a kind once common among Caucasian mountain dwellers (Fig. 388: 1). This doll was carried about when supplicating a god for rain. It has a red disk for a head, and it seems self-evident that this disk represents the sun. If this is so, we have here ■ sun god, who, ■ students of mythology maintain, bestowed rain in Indo-European belief. However, the idol's attire is not male, but female. This doll would then be the Great Goddess, the mistress of heavenly waters. There are other female representations with a disk instead of the head (Fig. 388: 6, 7) that support this assumption. A figurine of the goddess found among materials of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture is of interest (Fig. 390: 6); her head appears within a disk with radial strokes, coinciding with the heaven symbol. Another symbol of heaven is ■ disk with dots along the circumference, and the goddess' representation could therefore have such a crown, too (Fig. 388: 7). If such figurines do not have sex features but pertain to the Neolithic (Fig. 388: 3), one may regard them as representations of the heaven goddess. If, on the other hand, an idol with a disk for a head has ■ male sex feature (Fig. 388: 2), this is apparently ■ later image of the sun or heaven god. Anthropomorphic Bronze Age figurines with a disk (Fig. 388: 4, 5) are most likely to be idols of the sun deity, because by that time the cult of the goddess had been superseded by ■ different religious conception. It is due to such portrayals that many myths describe the sun as a head [683, p. 194].

The anthropomorphic image of a deity with a disk was ■ result of certain mythological conceptions. The Great Goddess was imagined as residing not only in heaven. She was the whole world; her head was the upper world, heaven. She was therefore portrayed with the disk, symbol of heaven, as her head. Anthropomorphic figurines of this type were then reinterpreted as representing the sun god, because according to later conceptions, this disk designated the sun.

However, since not only the god's head, but the god in his entirety was an incarnation of the sun (or of heaven), the figurines of a different type emerged, with a disk on the body. A typical example is the manner, consistent over

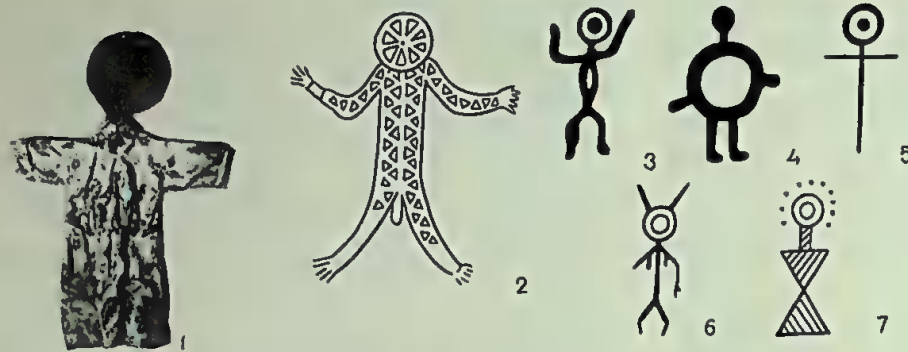


Fig. 388. Anthropomorphic figures of a deity: 1 — Daghestan (museum in Akhty); 2 — highland Georgia [305, p. 100]; 3 — Karelia [81, p. 182]; 4 — Sweden [290a, p. 90]; 5 — Kirghizia [184, pl. 8]; 6 — Northern Russia [552, p. 47]; 7 — Italy [847, p. 15].

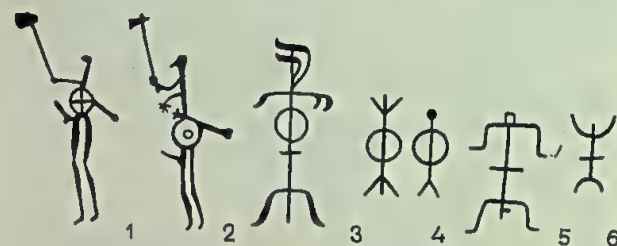


Fig. 389. Portrayals of White God: 1, 2 — Sweden [746, fig. 32]; 3 — Iceland [504]; 4 — Daghestan [139, p. 83]; 5 — Belorussia [214, p. 212]; 6 — Siberia [571, p. 249].

thousands of years, of portraying the Scandinavian god Thor (Fig. 389: 1-3). When the cross, like the disk, became a solar symbol during the Bronze Age, it was depicted on the god's trunk (Figs. 389: 5, 6; 393: 2). This type of composition was probably not conceived in the Bronze Age; it may already have been in existence as far back as the Neolithic as a representation of the Black God, for the cross was his symbol.

Riders with dots around the head can be found among rock wall paintings in Daghestan (Figs. 390: 1; 393: 1). The image of the rider god emerged during the Bronze Age, when riding was an Indo-Europeans' prerogative. But the Black God, still venerated during the Bronze Age, was also sometimes pictured as a rider. In the Daghestan rock wall paintings, the rider is represented in red (the color of the underworld god), and the dots around his head (sometimes also around the head of the horse or around the entire figure) are yellow (the color of seed). These riders could therefore represent the earth god, or at least be connected with his image by origin. Yet they may also be regarded as representations of the god whose head is the sun. In Ancient Greece the sun god's head was surrounded by rays (Fig. 395: 4). Riders and unmounted warriors with a nimbus in the form of an arch with rays are encountered in rock wall paintings in Italy [628, p. 213] (Fig. 395: 3). This type of nimbus was also known in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 390: 3).

Various types of nimbus initially emerged as symbols of the Neolithic heaven goddess. An arch with rays for the goddess' head, sometimes another heaven symbol, the



Fig. 390. Deity with nimbus: 1 — Daghestan, rock wall picture near Trisanchi [141, p. 101]; 2 — Daghestan, Machada [141, p. 109]; 3 — rock wall picture in North America [702, p. 92]; 4 — Carthage [646a, p. 202]; 5 — Asia Minor, ca 6000 BC [764a, p. 329]; 6 — Rumania, Neolithic [667, pl. 54]; 7 — Asia Minor, ca 2000 BC [727, pl. 13]; 8 — Peru, ca 1000 CE [751, p. 95]; 9 — rock wall picture in Kazakhstan [8, p. 143]; 10 — rock wall picture in Australia [292, p. 404].

disk, first appeared as far back as the Mesolithic (Fig. 372: 3). This symbol was an accessory of female representations in the Neolithic (Fig. 390: 6), and then of male figures during the Bronze Age (Fig. 390: 9). Still, the heaven sign of an arch with dots continued to appear in female representations during the Bronze Age (Fig. 390: 7) and in Classical Antiquity (Fig. 390: 4). It was also known in pre-Columbian America (Fig. 390: 8); that this figurine does represent the Great Goddess is confirmed by details like the wings and folded arms). The rays around the head of the ancient Greek sun god (Fig. 395: 4) taper, which points to their non-solar origin (cf. Fig. 57: 4).

The image of the Great Goddess, which took shape in Western Asia during the Neolithic, is encountered in relatively recent rock wall paintings in Australia (Fig. 390: 10). As explained by the aborigines, these pictures represent a mythical female being who bestows rain and favors childbirth, propagation of animals, and plant growth [274, p. 404]. An arch-shaped nimbus around her head corresponds to other archaic nimbus designs; the arch, as we know, is a cloud sign and emblem of the Great Goddess. The strokes issuing from the nimbus are wavy; this depicts jets of rain, rather than sun rays (cf. Fig. 26: 7, 8).

The medieval Western European crown with beads at the tips of triangular protuberances resembles a heaven symbol (Fig. 11: 6, 7). As far back as the Early Neolithic, female idols wore a diadem-nimbus in the form of a toothed crown (Fig. 390: 5). Kybele was portrayed wearing a jagged crown or diadem. Diadems adorned the heads of the Greek Hera and the Roman Juno. Women imitated the goddess by wearing diadems (Fig. 390: 7); the Russian kokoshnik, an old time women's headdress, was of the same origin. The diadem was an attribute of the divine mistress, so it became a symbol of royal authority. The head band worn by ancient priests was also called "diadem." Some peoples, for example the Japanese and the Jews, still observe an old custom: before starting on a crucial undertaking demanding physical and spiritual effort, they wrap a piece of white cloth round the head.

All this suggests that the nimbus emerged as an attribute of the Neolithic goddess. It expressed the notion that her head was in heaven, or that she herself was heaven. Later the nimbus was reinterpreted as a halo around the head of the sun god. It was subsequently used as a symbol of divinity in representations of Roman gods and emperors and of Buddhist and Christian saints.

Quadrangular nimbuses were used in Western Europe until the fifth century; an example dating approximately from the 16th or 17th century was found in Daghestan (Fig. 390: 2). This may be seen as an expression of a tendency towards transforming curvilinear figures into angular ones. Yet a different phenomenon may be responsible here. Perhaps the rhomboid nimbus is an earth sign on the head of the earth god, like the heaven sign on the head of the heaven goddess. Rhomboid heads of male figures (Fig. 162: 1, 2) might have originated in this way. A traditional male headdress with a square top intersected by an oblique cross is worn by Uzbeks and Poles; theologians wore a headdress with a square top in medieval Europe. The English word *squarehead* may derive from the fact that some pagan idols had square heads (incidentally, the Russian word

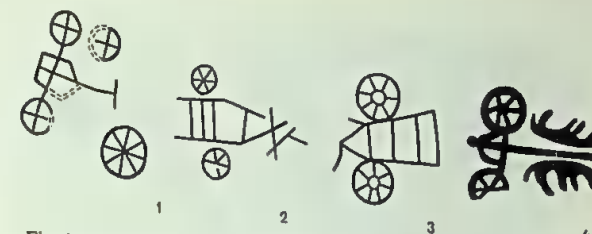


Fig. 391. Bronze Age chariot representations: 1 — picture on a stone slab of a tomb, Daghestan [261, p. 68]; 2 — rock wall picture, Daghestan [325, p. 130]; 3 — Azerbaijan [146, p. 48]; 4 — Pamirs [316, p. 86].

bolvan for 'blockhead, dummy' used to mean 'idol'). Jewish phylacteries are two small square leather boxes, one worn on the head; there can hardly be any doubt that they derive from the emblem of the earth god, worn by ancestors of the Jews while worshipping. These facts may be adduced in favor of the assumption that rhombic outlines of the head in representations of male figurines and quadrangular nimbuses are not the result of the transformation of a circle into a quadrangle, but are a distinct symbol, that of the earth god.

Thus, by origin the nimbus is not a symbol of the sun but of heaven, sometimes of earth, and in both cases it goes back to Neolithic symbolism.

The sun chariot is associated with the image of the White God. Let us look at some relevant examples.

There are numerous burials in stone coffins in Daghestan, dating from the Bronze Age. The box holding the deceased was built of large stone slabs. A carriage is painted on a slab of one such a coffin. The archeologist A. Kruglov, who discovered and published the design, called it a "representation of a bullock cart" (Fig. 391: 1).

The monument described by A. Kruglov is located in the seaside plain of Daghestan; a similar picture published by V. Markovin was found among rock wall drawings in the foothill zone (Fig. 391: 2). The archeologist A. Mandelstam, who described an ancient picture of a carriage driven by a pair of horses in the Pamirs (Fig. 391: 4), notes that it was a most unusual find for a mountainous region, because there was no wheeled transport in mountains in ancient times (there were no words for 'wheel' in local Daghestan languages until the beginning of the twentieth century).

Indeed, if ancient drawings are always seen as representations of actual objects, it may puzzle the observer to encounter them in localities where their prototypes never existed. Even if the carriage was common, the question arises why this particular object so captivated ancient artists, why the desire to represent it was so persistent: this type of drawing is found on territory from the Pyrenees to Central Asia. Noteworthy is the fact that carriages were usually represented outside a context which could enable their interpretation as portrayals from life. All these circumstances render rationalistic interpretations of the above drawings unconvincing.

There are not only pictures of carriages, but also models, suggesting that some special significance was attached to the carriage in ancient times. In Central Europe, odd and Bronze Age objects in the form of a pot on wheels and decorated with birds' heads have been found (Fig. 290:

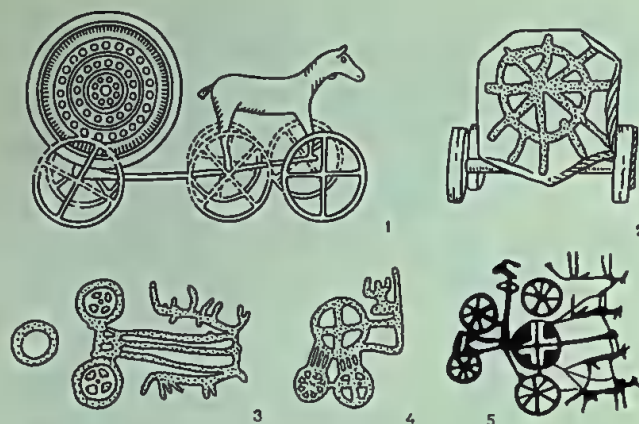


Fig. 392. Ancient representations of chariot with sun symbol: 1 — Denmark [809b, p. 308]; 2 — Russia [149, p. 482]; 3, 4 — Sweden [746, p. 153; 743, p. 163]; 5 — Mongolia [216, p. 22].

1). "Strange baked clay wheelbarrow toys on four wheels" existed in pre-Columbian America [118, p. 40], where no wheeled transport was known. These are hardly toys. They are rather cult objects.

Numerous representations known of the carriage transporting a solar sign (Fig. 392). The carriage with the sun is obviously the sun chariot of myths and legends. It should be assumed that even when the carriage was depicted without a sun symbol, it was still a mythological object, and not a bullock cart for transporting wood or hay. The conclusion is that these carriage drawings, as well as those with the solar sign, are also cult representations rather than real life depictions.

The mythopoetic image of the speedy horse-drawn chariot in which the sun god or the thundergod rides appeared when Indo-Europeans were already settling the vast territory encompassing Europe and the western half of Asia. Symbolic representations of the carriage and the relevant mythological notions therefore could not have been a tradition stemming from a Proto-Indo-European community. Their origin by ancient Indo-Europeans from the Pyrenees to Central Asia must have been due to propagation by diffusion, passing from people to people. Another example typical of Indo-European cultures, but coming from pre-Indo-European times, is the rite of burning corpses. Thus, if a certain phenomenon, like a myth or a cult image, is found among different Indo-European peoples, that in itself does not indicate that its origin must be sought in Proto-Indo-European culture.

What then is the origin of the sun chariot image? In a Neolithic myth, the sun rushed across the sky on the antlers of a deer. As time passed, the deer was replaced by a horse, because both were perceived as underworld creatures. Then, alongside the horse, there appeared the chariot. It was not only a sun chariot. The thundergod was frequently portrayed dashing through the sky in a chariot; this image must have emerged in the fourth or third millennium B.C. There were as yet no war chariots, but there were heavy, clumsy carts. Their connection with the thundergod apparently arose because the rumbling sound these carriages produced with their massive wheels rolling along uneven roads was associated in people's imagination with peals of thunder. The chariot had been associated with

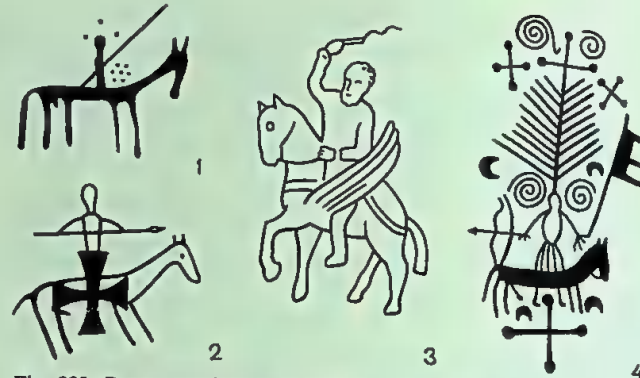


Fig. 393. Representations of horseman god, Daghestan: 1 — rock wall picture near settlement of Anada; 2 — carved stone in a wall masonry, Khotoda [141, p. 110]; 3 — stone bas-relief (museum in Makhachkala); 4 — tomb stela in Irib [141, p. 109].

the thundergod, who was also the underworld god; this is why Babylonians avoided riding in a chariot on Saturday, the god's day. In the course of time, the sun, too, began to be imagined riding in a chariot.

The sun god, whose personage was formed in the third or second millennium B.C., was also pictured on a horse. Daghestanian rock wall paintings, most probably dating from the Bronze Age, include a rider transporting the sun (Fig. 393: 1). A picture of the rider combined with a cross is repeatedly encountered in Daghestan (Fig. 393: 2, 4). The cross was a Neolithic symbol of the earth god, so that this rider could well be the Black God. It cannot, however, be ruled out that these are semblances of the sun god. A rider on a winged horse (Fig. 393: 3) may also have been the sun god, since the celestial horse, which replaced the deer with golden antlers, belongs in the category of solar myths.

The cult and mythological personage who could be a solar deity was accepted and portrayed as a rider in India, Western and Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe [815]. A rider referred to as "the son of the heaven god" was recorded in the pagan cult of some Siberian ethnic groups [460, p. 32]. A god in the image of a rider was a major deity of the Thracians (the Greeks called him Eros); he was regarded as a patron of agriculture and cattle-breeding and a bestower of rain [128, p. 35]. Consequently, ancient representations of the rider are not necessarily those of the sun god; they could be secondary survivals of the more archaic Black God image.

A conclusion from all this is that if the rider is common in Bronze Age rock wall paintings in Daghestan, or on medieval grave stelae, these images should not be associated with the "development of horse breeding," as maintained by some authors, but with a religious cult. Similarly, in India, the numerous medieval elephant representations are not due to the economic significance of the elephant in that country: its image was a symbol of peace. It may be appropriate here to quote Vladimir Stasov's remark about figures of animals and people in Russian folk art: "One should by no means see living beings in them, we see idols before us" [502, p. 18].

As the horse and the rider personified the venerated deity, their representations were erected on temple and housetops in Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia (Figs. 394, 287: 4).



Fig. 394. Sacred emblem crowning a structure: 1 — Sicily, ca 800 BC [618h, pl. 95]; 2 — Russian folk architecture [178, p. 53]; 3 — Crimea, ca 200 CE [608, p. 92]; 4 — Ukraine, ca 1900 [608, p. 92]; 5 — Northwestern Iran, ca 900 BC [528, pl. 63]; 6 — North Ossetia, ca 1000 BC [708, pl. 5]; 7 — Muslim tomb in Daghestan, Khpej.

In the chapters "The Sun" and "The Black God" we discussed the origin of the spear symbol. During the Neolithic, the spear was associated with the phallus and the snake, and was therefore a symbol of the Black God. During the Bronze Age, the pointed rays around the disk were understood as representations of the sun god's spears. From the Bronze Age on, the spear became a symbol of the White God; that is why St. George vanquishes the serpent with a spear.

Spear and arrow were important cult symbols in ancient times (Fig. 382: 6). The spear was installed near temple entrances, the arrow was an offering to the gods [356, p. 428]. Spear or arrow representations decorated pediments of temples and houses (Fig. 394: 3-5). Evidence presented above (see the chapter "The Black God") suggests that the spear and the arrow were venerated not simply as weapons (the sword and dagger, which do not figure among cult symbols, were no less important as weaponry), but as symbols of the deity. The custom of crowning venerated structures with pagan emblems continued in Daghestan down to the twentieth century, despite centuries of Islamic domination: tombs of Muslim sheikhs are crowned with a ball (Fig. 394: 7). Medieval pagan tombs in Checheno-Ingushetia and North Ossetia were crowned with a ball or spire-like stone. The ball must be the sun, while the spire was the White God's spear. However, these symbols may be understood differently here. Numerous instances show that Caucasian mountain dwellers until quite recently maintained beliefs born of the Neolithic religion. As repeatedly pointed out in this book, one's dwelling place was considered to be under the protection of the Black God. For that reason the spire-like stone crowning a structure may reflect Neolithic symbolism, i.e., the arrow/phallus. As for the stone with a ball-shaped top, it too need not necessarily be a solar symbol: it may

be a phallic image, a symbol of the Black God.

It is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to identify the sun god in archaic Indo-European cult and mythological conceptions. The reason is that the god had not yet been clearly defined; in some cases, the sun-god was formed late as historic times, like Apollo in Greece and Mithra in Iran. Except in these isolated and not so remote cases, the solar deity never played a significant role in Indo-European religions. However, the sun proper was often named as a symbol of light and good, as in the formula "the divine sun."

It is impossible to say whether respect for the sun on the part of some Indo-European peoples was a heritage of the oldest essentially Indo-European beliefs, or not, nothing is known of these beliefs. It may well be that it came from the early farmers' religion, in which the sun, though not rated among the supreme deities, was still deified. Quite possibly it reflects heightened veneration for the sun among Western Asians in the second and first millennia B.C. As for examples of clearly expressed veneration for the sun god, the corresponding cult took shape in relatively recent times.

The Avesta represents Mithra as a warrior god, a rider on a white horse. As already pointed out, the Avestan Mithra cannot be considered an original sun god; he became such in Classical Antiquity, and in this capacity is a typical example of the sun god as the source of light and virtue.

Apollo, like Mithra, also acquired significance as the sun god as recently in Classical Antiquity. Homer does not associate him with the sun, but gives him the epithet "luminous." This is not an essentially solar feature: the name *minos* is also "luminous," and Lucifer, as is known, is not the sun, but the devil. One of Apollo's folk names was "phoebos lykeios" ("luminous wolf"). Homer represents Apollo as a mythical hero who turned into a dolphin and swam the sea; when he stepped on shore, sparks flew from him (one of the Black God's characteristics was an ability

to turn into a fiery flying serpent, or into a water serpent). Proceeding from this, L. Schroeder suggested that Apollo was originally a god of fire [829b, p. 503]. But that was an attribute of the lord of the underworld. Other features, such as the snake, the wolf, the mouse, the swan, and the staff, also point to Apollo's origin from the Black God. In various legends, Apollo is either a patron of wolves or himself a wolf. The nickname Tortor [730b, p. 1590] indicates that he was once an underworld god named *t.r. The Greeks celebrated Apollo's birthday in February, which coincides with Shrovetide/Carnival, the feast of the underworld god's awakening from his winter sleep. A pointed pillar was Apollo's oldest fetish [829b, p. 218], in which one can see the phallus, the Black God's attribute (ancient Egyptian obelisks and Neolithic menhirs seem to belong in this category of the Black God's symbols). Like the Black God, Apollo was prophetic, a patron of trades, music, and arts, a patron of shepherds and healers, a founder of cities. Other characteristics betray the Black God in him, the Black God who merely became adapted to the role of sun god, bearer of light and virtue: human sacrifice by burning was offered to him; men who died suddenly, without apparent cause, were believed pierced by Apollo's arrow; he killed Marsyas, who presumed to compete with him in flute playing, by flaying him alive.

Apollo's name also reveals his origin. In ancient inscriptions in Italy, his name occurs with the epithet Belenus or Belinus [541, p. 16], *bel* being the root. One of the names for the devil in ancient Christian literature was Apollyon. In India, Ap or Apas is a deity of water [730a, p. 106]; Apa of the Persians is also a water spirit. In Indo-Iranian mythology, Apam-Napat, "heavenly fire," lightning, called "son of waters," was identified with Agni. Apa-Hau is the demon of the thunderstorm in Polynesia. Apat was a name of a mythical ancient Egyptian serpent who unleashed storms and devoured the dead. Apis was the sacred bull in Ancient Egypt; his name compares to the Greek *ophis*, 'snake.' In Babylonian mythology, Apsu was the spouse of Tiamath, an incarnation of primordial chaos, also a sea monster and bestower of fertility. Apellon is an archaic form of Apollo, suggesting etymological affinity with the word for 'apple tree.' In times of Classical Antiquity, an apple tree deity named Abelloni was venerated in the south of France [710, p. 8]. Judging by allusions in some myths and beliefs, the apple tree was dedicated to the Black God.

Thus, the image of the sun god who, if one accepts statements by authors of many studies on mythology and religion, was supreme and highly venerated in Indo-European paganism and even worldwide, turns out to be pale and vague. The sun was venerated, and the solar deity did exist in paganism; however, he was not a major member of the pantheon and was secondary in origin. The image of the sun god combined earlier notions of the sun goddess emerging from the underworld, and of the underworld god (for the latter was incarnated in fire, and the sun is also fire).

There is much linguistic evidence for the former mythological association between the sun and the underworld.

However strange it may seem, there is no specific word for the sun in the vocabulary of the Nostratic language as

reconstructed, for all its impact is a natural phenomenon. An explanation could be that the sun was mythicized, and the mythological conceptions associated with it changed. It was labelled by different words that do not go back to a common origin; these words collided and competed, and ousted and replaced one another.

In the chapter "The Sun" we discussed the connection between the name of the Egyptian sun god Ra and the Neolithic god of underground fire.

The Nostratic word **maza* means 'light, sun'; the proto-Semitic **mš* and proto-Kartvelliian **mz* for 'sun' derived from it. This word may be linked to the name of the underworld god **ms* already mentioned.

In the chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers" we suggested that the word *helios* for the sun has the same root as *hell*.

The ~~name~~ of the Hattian-Hittite sun god Eštan, Ishtanu may have come from Ish-Taran, one of the Black God's names in Ancient Mesopotamia.

The ancient Indian name for the sun, *sūryah* must be connected with one of the forms of the underworld god's name of the *s.r* type.²⁹⁵

The Iranian word for the sun, *hur*, is paralleled in the names of the Etruscan god of death Haru, ancient Greek demon Haron, etc.

The Luvian name of the sun god Tiwat compares to the Germanic Tiw, and the Urartuan name of the sun god Šivini to the Hittite Siu (is it not remarkable that the sun is called *sua* by a Peruvian tribe [568a, p. 90]?). These names and terms may be placed in the same sequence as the Sanskrit *sū* ('give birth'), Ossetian *sus* ('phallus'), Hebrew *sus* ('horse'), Finnish *susi* ('wolf'), and Proto-Indo-European **seu*, *su* ('rain'). Tiw and Siu are variants of the common Indo-European name of the heaven god of the type *deos*, *zeus*, etc., which, as was shown above, descended from one of the names of the underworld god **t.v***t.r*.

The origin of the name of the Sumerian sun god Utu can also be traced (incidentally, it is not the only one of its kind: Intu was the sun god of the Incas). The Turkic *öt*, *ut*, *ud* stand for 'fire' (words with this root in Indo-European and Semito-Hamitic languages often adopt the sound *h* at the beginning: *ht*, *hot*, etc.). Turkic women offered sacrifices to fire and prayed to it for fertility [371b, p. 269]. How could experience induce one to ask fire for children? There is nothing rational about this custom; the thing is that fire was considered an incarnation of the underworld god, and the latter personified the male impregnating power. That is why in many languages *at*, *ata*, etc., stand for 'father.' The Proto-Indo-European **u(e)t* ('water') must be from the same root. What do fire and water have in common? The answer was evident to the mythological consciousness: both elements were under the control of the god of the lower universe.

A number of names of the Black God, sometimes of his spouse, appear to be etymologically related to the name of the Sumerian sun god Utu. First of all the Greek Hades, 'Aides must be mentioned. The corresponding Slavic *gad* ('serpent') and *ad* ('hell') cannot be considered borrowings from the Greek, because the names Hades

²⁹⁵ See chapter "The Bull-Moon."

and 'Aides became obsolete in the Greek language long before the Slavs emerged. Aton was the name of both the Egyptian and Aztec sun gods. Atum was the Egyptian deity of the setting sun; he was chthonic, conceived as a serpent, and considered the primordial demiurge deity. Atam was the Mordovian thundergod. The Teutonic Wotan had some features of the Black God. Hati was a monster wolf in Norse mythology. Od, Oder was a deity with undefined functions in Norse mythology, though one thing is clear: he was a supreme deity, for *od* means 'god' in the Norwegian language; it is possible to get an idea of his character by taking into account that the Teutonic masculine name Otto is etymologically associated with words meaning 'wealth, riches' and 'mountain' [730b, p. 1221]. This may moreover be supported by the name of the River Oder, for the god of the lower universe was also the god of rivers. Udo is the name of the moon god of the Sumu Indians; the planet Venus is his wife [730, p. 1620].

In many Indo-European languages, the name of the sun has the root *s.l*. Sela, Seli was the thundergod in Vainakhian mythology. Šala was the Canaanite goddess of thunderstorms [730b, p. 1429]. Selah was an ancient Hebrew name meaning 'rock'. The Greek Selene is a personification of the moon. Her name is comparable to Seilenos, Italic Silanus, "spirit of water." Selinos is the Greek god of rivers. The Greek Silenos, the Roman Silanus, Sylvanus are other names for Pan and Faunus. Selamaneš or Salem was a god of war in Assyria. The Hittites had the "god of gates" Salavani. Solbon was a mythological personage, male in the beliefs of some Siberian ethnic groups (he had three wives), while other Siberians pictured the deity as a beautiful girl dwelling in heaven (i.e., this is the name of the underworld god and his daughter the sun maiden). Selwanga is a Bantu healer god in the image of a serpent [730b, p. 1415]. The form *s.l* apparently derives from *s.r* which, like *t.r*, is a root in some names and terms associated with the earth god (for example, *serpent*). If *S.l* was the Black God's name, his wife should have had a similar name. Indeed, Salus of the ancient Romans was the goddess of fertility, the Cherokee Indian Selu was the "mother of grains" and wife of the divine hunter [730b, p. 1415]. Salt was an evil Babylonian goddess.

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III. The third type of the White God, after the heaven god and sun god, was the *god of spring*. It is impossible to draw a sharp demarcation between this god, on the one hand, and the sun god, thunderer and serpent fighter, on the other, because they all have features in common. Yet, some personages of this type do not represent the sun, do not cause thunderstorms, and do not fight the serpent. They are discussed here from the point of view of their hypothetical function as gods of spring, because the rites dedicated to them were observed in spring.

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The Christian St. George combines characteristics of two different personages. The history of the Christian martyr George is that he, scion of a noble family, who occupied a prominent position in the Roman army, resigned from the military and went forth to preach Christianity during

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to turn into a fiery flying serpent, or into a water serpent). Proceeding from this, L. Schroeder suggested that Apollo was originally a god of fire [829b, p. 503]. But that was an attribute of the lord of the underworld. Other features, such as the snake, the wolf, the mouse, the swan, and the staff, also point to Apollo's origin from the Black God. In various legends, Apollo is either a patron of wolves or himself a wolf. The nickname Tortor [730b, p. 1590] indicates that he was once an underworld god named *t.r. The Greeks celebrated Apollo's birthday in February, which coincides with Shrovetide/Carnival, the feast of the underworld god's awakening from his winter sleep. A pointed pillar was Apollo's oldest fetish [829b, p. 218], in which one can see the phallus, the Black God's attribute (ancient Egyptian obelisks and Neolithic menhirs seem to belong in this category of the Black God's symbols). Like the Black God, Apollo was prophetic, a patron of trades, music, and arts, a patron of shepherds and healers, a founder of cities. Other characteristics betray the Black God in him, the Black God who merely became adapted to the role of sun god, bearer of light and virtue: human sacrifice by burning was offered to him; men who died suddenly, without apparent cause, were believed pierced by Apollo's arrow; he killed Marsyas, who presumed to compete with him in flute playing, by flaying him alive.

Apollo's name also reveals his origin. In ancient inscriptions in Italy, his name occurs with the epithet Belenus or Belinus [541, p. 16], *bel* being the root. One of the names for the devil in ancient Christian literature was Apollyon. In India, Ap or Apas is a deity of water [730a, p. 106]; Apa of the Persians is also a water spirit. In Indo-Iranian mythology, Apam-Napot, "heavenly fire," lightning, called "son of waters," was identified with Agni. Apa-Hau is the demon of the thunderstorm in Polynesia. Apat was a name of a mythical ancient Egyptian serpent who unleashed storms and devoured the dead. Apis was the sacred bull in Ancient Egypt; his name compares to the Greek *ophis*, 'snake.' In Babylonian mythology, Apsu was the spouse of Tiamath, an incarnation of primordial chaos, also a sea monster and bestower of fertility. Apellon is an archaic form of Apollo, suggesting etymological affinity with the word for 'apple tree.' In times of Classical Antiquity, an apple tree deity named Abelloni was venerated in the south of France [710, p. 8]. Judging by allusions in some myths and beliefs, the apple tree was dedicated to the Black God.

Thus, the image of the sun god who, if one accepts statements by authors of many studies on mythology and religion, was supreme and highly venerated in Indo-European paganism and even worldwide, turns out to be pale and vague. The sun was venerated, and the solar deity did exist in paganism; however, he was not a major member of the pantheon and was secondary in origin. The image of the sun god combined earlier notions of the sun goddess emerging from the underworld, and of the underworld god (for the latter was incarnated in fire, and the sun is also fire).

There is much linguistic evidence for the former mythological association between the sun and the underworld.

However strange it may seem, there is no specific word for the sun in the vocabulary of the Nostratic language as

reconstructed, for all its impact as a natural phenomenon. An explanation could be that the sun was mythicized, and the mythological conceptions associated with it changed. It was labelled by different words that do not go back to a common origin; these words collided and competed, and ousted and replaced one another.

In the chapter "The Sun" we discussed the connection between the name of the Egyptian sun god Ra and the Neolithic god of underground fire.

The Nostratic word *maza means 'light, sun'; the proto-Semitic *mš and proto-Kartvillian *mz for 'sun' derived from it. This word may be linked to the name of the underworld god *ms already mentioned.

In the chapter "The Deer with the Golden Antlers" we suggested that the word *helios* for the sun has the same root as *hell*.

The name of the Hattian-Hittite sun god Eštan, Ishtanu may have come from Ish-Taran, one of the Black God's names in Ancient Mesopotamia.

The ancient Indian name for the sun, *sūryah* must be connected with one of the forms of the underworld god's name of the *s.r* type.²⁹⁵

The Iranian word for the sun, *hur*, is paralleled in the names of the Etruscan god of death Haru, ancient Greek demon Haron, etc.

The Luvian name of the sun god Tiwat compares to the Germanic Tiw, and the Urartuan name of the sun god Šivini to the Hittite Siu (is it not remarkable that the sun is called *sua* by a Peruvian tribe [568a, p. 90]?). These names and terms may be placed in the same sequence as the Sanskrit *sū* ('give birth'), Ossetian *sus* ('phallus'), Hebrew *sus* ('horse'), Finnish *susi* ('wolf'), and Proto-Indo-European *seu, su ('rain'). Tiw and Siu are variants of the common Indo-European name of the heaven god of the type *deos, zeus*, etc., which, as was shown above, descended from one of the names of the underworld god *t.v.*t.r.

The origin of the name of the Sumerian sun god Utu can also be traced (incidentally, it is not the only one of its kind: Intu was the sun god of the Incas). The Turkic *öt, ut, ud* stand for 'fire' (words with this root in Indo-European and Semito-Hamitic languages often adopt the sound *h* at the beginning: *ht, hot*, etc.). Turkic women offered sacrifices to fire and prayed to it for fertility [371b, p. 269]. How could experience induce one to ask fire for children? There is nothing rational about this custom; the thing is that fire was considered an incarnation of the underworld god, and the latter personified the male impregnating power. That is why in many languages *ata, etc.*, stand for 'father.' The Proto-Indo-European *u(e)t ('water') must be from the same root. What do fire and water have in common? The answer was evident to the mythological consciousness: both elements were under the control of the god of the lower universe.

A number of names of the Black God, sometimes of his spouse, appear to be etymologically related to the name of the Sumerian sun god Utu. First of all the Greek Hades, 'Aides must be mentioned. The corresponding Slavic *gad* ('serpent') and *ad* ('hell') cannot be considered borrowings from the Greek, because the names Hades

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Diocletian persecutions, for which he was put to death. There were many others who paid such a price for their faith, so the very fact of this martyrdom could not have been the reason for St. George's extraordinary popularity. The point is apparently that the Christian George had the same name as a popular mythological personage, and the two images blended. It is noteworthy that the oldest account of the Life of St. George, dating from the fourth or fifth century, was banned by the Church. Later, however, the Church, as usual, compromised and assimilated the myth of George, which was not the story of the Christian martyr George. According to the myth, the hero defeated a monster serpent that terrorized people by demanding their children for food; he also succoured a royal princess who was intended as a sacrifice to the monster. This myth was quite popular in Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia; its pagan origin is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that even Muslims venerated George. The Church attributed to him not only the heroic deeds of the pagan myth, but also the dates associated with the pagan personage: according to the Christian version, St. George was beheaded on the 23rd of April, and the "miracle of the serpent and the maiden" took place on another St. George day, the 26th of November.

In the Muslim legend, like in the early Christian version, George died and rose again three times, which brings his image close to that of the Neolithic earth god. George is identified with the "wild hunter" in Slav and other European folklore; he was considered a patron of wolves. The Czechs believed that the earth opened up on St. George's day and released snakes; St. George's day was associated by the Czechs and Slovaks with legendary snakes guarding hidden treasures. On St. George's day, as on Ivan-Kupala's day, Slavs gathered medicinal herbs and plants accredited with miraculous properties (a gift of the earth god) and buried donations (usually a piece of bread) in the ground; on that day wreaths (a symbol of the heaven goddess) were woven, sheep were milked through the wreaths, and circular ritual bread was baked [228b, pp. 233, 262]. On St. George's day fires were lit and hidden treasures sought. Caucasian legends referred to St. George as the "winged saint"; he sometimes appeared as fire. Eggs figured in the ritual of St. George's day, the 23rd of April: eggs were rolled, shepherds were given an egg. The shepherd performed a ritual: he went round his herd carrying an egg, a loaf of bread, and an axe. In Albania, on St. George's day people rubbed their eyes with walnut leaves, adorned their dwellings with walnut branches, and ate nuts during meals [228b, p. 309-318]. The celebration of St. George's day everywhere involved rites recalling cattle breeding; on that day cattle was driven to pasture for the first time, sometimes passing through fire on the way. Another custom was bathing and adorning horses [693, p. 43]. Sometimes a horse was sacrificed to the deity on St. George's spring and autumn days.

The name of Yarila/Yuriy is apparently related to that of the Greek Eros or Heros, if one remembers that *Yarila* is etymologically akin to words for eagle, and the name Heros nearly coincides with the Hittite *haraš* ('eagle'). But the eagle, associated with the sun and the heaven god since the second millennium B.C., was a "thunder bird" in more

archaic beliefs; it represented the underworld god who rose to heaven. In classical Greek mythology, Eros appears as a deity of love, which can be seen as a personification of one of the Black God's functions. Some students of mythology believe that Eros was an archaic deity of spring. However, there are authentic data on his character in the archaic period: Hesiod refers to Eros as a highly honored deity who introduced order into the world's chaos. He was therefore a demiurge; some classical authors portray Eros as a primordial god. An archaic version credits Eros as lord of heaven, the sea, earth, and the kingdom of the dead [371b, p. 668]. An element in the Eros myth emphasizes his relationship to ancient Oriental earth gods who died and rose from the dead: his bride Psyche seeks him when he disappears in the underworld. Like George, Eros/Heros was pictured as a rider armed with a spear [198, p. 210]. When he turned into a deity of love, the arrow became his attribute, symbolizing ennobled love, no longer the phallus. In Hellenistic times, the elegant Eros still showed characteristics of the earlier Black God, such as caprice and cruelty.

The name Heros resembles that of Heracles. The two deities had certain features in common: both were incarnations of male sexuality. By way of comparison, Slavic feasts in honor of Yarila were bacchanalian and involved erotic ritual elements. Both Eros and Heracles were sometimes represented by a rough-hewn stone [225, p. 20]. A. Famintsyn compares the names of Yarila and Heracles (one version was Herilus) [541, pp. 229, 231]. Greek myths mention Heracles' son Teleph (Hittite-Hattian Talipinu was the son of the Black God). Heracles was armed with a cudgel, like other mythological personages connected by origin with the Black God. As one can see, the images of Heracles, Eros, and Yarila have no links with spring.

It was pointed out above that the Old Slavic word *orah*, with which the name Yarila is associated, may be traced to the Nostratic **horä* ('rise'). If so, the Egyptian heaven god Hor (Horus) who, as shown elsewhere in this book, is a heavenly manifestation of the underworld god, would be a match for Yarila. In Slavic legends the "wild hunter" Yuriy was accompanied by greyhounds called *hort*, or by wolves; wolves are known as "St. Yuriy's horts" in the Ukraine.

Another word in the Nostratic language with which the name *Yarila* could be linked is **jarā* ('shine'); *Yarila* is apparently a deity radiating light, rather than the deity of spring. According to V. Illych-Svitych, the Slavic *yar* ('spring') derives from the Proto-Indo-European **yehr* ('year') [210b, p. 83] and not from **jarā*. There are words in Hebrew similar to the name *Yarila*; if they are etymologically related, this would also point to association between this "god of spring" and the Black God. Such words include: *yareah* ('moon'), *yar'ah* ('fear'), and *yara'* ('nasty mood').

The name *Yarila* has been compared by Russian students of mythology to such words as *yary* ('violent'), *yarky* ('bright'), and so on. The word *yarky* is semantically related to *žar* ('heat'). It appears that the forms *ar*, *er*, *ir* are variants of the root *yar*. If so, the name of the Greek god of war Ares is a companion to the name of the Slavic deity *Yarila*. The Greek Ares personified certain features of the Black God — murder, bloodshed, destruction; the dog and the vulture were dedicated to him.

A few more mythological personages should be mentioned in connection with *Yarila* and Eros. Eire is the Celtic mother of gods, the eponym of Ireland; her name compares with that of the Greek goddess of fate Erynia; the corresponding Roman Furies were three ferocious goddesses, sometimes imaged as snakes. Northern Caucasian mountain dwellers apparently venerated a deity bearing a similar name: the Avars are called Hiri by their neighbors, and the Ossets still call themselves Ir or Hir; ancient written sources place Her people in the central part of the Northern Caucasus, i.e., contemporary North Ossetia; a medieval Georgian chronicle names Heros as a progenitor of this people. It is possible that the German *Herr* ('sir, mister') derives from the name of the venerated deity **h.r*. Ira was a god of war in Assyro-Babylonia [689a, p. 838]. Horei is an evil spirit in Western Africa [730a, p. 787]. Uras was another name of the Assyrian god of fire Ninib (the Sumerian Nergal or Neri). Urien was a British god of battles; this word was also one of the names of the devil [730b, p. 1629]. The Hebrew *or* ('wr') stands for 'light,' the Latin *ūro* means 'burn.' Apparently, the combination of this root with the formant *an* ('sky') produced the name Uranus. In a Hittite myth, Aruna was the god of the sun who took the sun away to his abode. The Vedic Aruna was the chariot attendant of the sun; he was born from an egg.

Some authors believe that *yar*, the root of the name *Yarila*, can be identified with *ar*, the root of the name Ares, that *yar/ar* means 'light, fervor, passion' [541, p. 220], and that the Greek Ares and Roman Mars correspond to the Slavic *Yarila*/Herovit [198, pp. 183, 206].

It is true that Mars is related to these deities, and the possibility of the transition *hr/mr* cannot be ruled out (on the other hand, the form *mr* could derive from *br* and the name Mars can be a phonetic variant of words for the Black God, such as *bars*, *pars*, *veles*). The name Mars is similar to that of "Kybele's friend," the satyr Marsyas (who was somehow connected with rivers), to the name of the Vedic storm spirits Marūt (prayed to not only for rain, but also for health and riches) [371b, p. 121], to the name of the Ceylonese god of life and death Maru, and to such names of the Great Goddess as Martha and Mara. In the mythology of New Guinea, Marai is a secret name of the moon. Martu was a Sumerian name of the supreme god of the Amorites; he was a thunderer; his other name was Amurru.

It was pointed out in the chapter "The Great Goddess" that words such as the Indo-European *māre* ('sea') and *mōr* ('bog'), Arabic *mar* ('man'), Latin *mortis* ('death'), Hebrew *mar* ('bitter, cruel'), and others can be compared with this category of names.

Mars had other names in addition to his principal one: Mamers, Marmor. They sound similar to Mimir in Scandinavian mythology, a mysterious master of the source of wisdom located among the roots of the World Tree, also Marmuriena, a variant of the name of the Slavic Marena, and Marmer, a name of the Sumerian Ishkur. Ishkur was also known as Mer and Bir.

Mars resembles *Yarila*—*Yuriy*—*George*, though he exhibits features more obviously indicating origin from the Black God. Mars was an agrarian deity in the early stage

of the ancient Roman religion. He was prayed to for deliverance from starvation and illness; the ritual involved walking three rounds and offering three sacrifices. Twelve shields representing twelve months were among Mars' symbols; he was active for eight months and slept for four. The deity was born anew at the end of February or beginning of March. The corresponding feast resembled the Western European Carnival and nearly coincided with it in time. It was a merry festival featuring tribute to the phallus and unbridled erotic revelry. An element of the feast was a rite in which a man called "old Mars", dressed in animal skins, was exiled from the city. Mars was considered the father of the twins Romulus and Remus and thus the progenitor of the Roman people. He was venerated as a wolf. The shield and spear were his attributes. His agrarian functions were gradually assimilated by the Sabine Quirinus, and Mars himself became the god of war, retaining this function of the Black God. The Romans compared Mars not only to Ares, but also Apollo; this was not extraordinary, since all these deities had a common origin. The name Mars was an eponym of some tribes: an ancient one in Italy which fought the Latinians was called Marses, as was an entirely different Teuton tribe.

Tuesday was dedicated to Mars, as well as to George and the Teutonic Tiu. This day of the week was dedicated to the god of war apparently because the Black God, his prototype, was considered dual. The next, third day of the week was dedicated to the god of the air, Mercury, again because this deity derived from a manifestation of the Black God who rose to heaven and created storms, and the Black God was considered threefold, living through three stages over the year. Thursday, the fourth day, was dedicated to Jupiter and other personifications of the thundergod, because the thunder god originated from the Black God who was considered fourfold as the four quarters of the world. Saturday, the sixth day of the week, was dedicated to Saturn, i.e., again to the Black God, because the earth, like the heavens, has six radii directed southwards, northwards, and to the extreme points of sunrise and sunset; the disk with six radii was called the "thunder sign" in Russia [474, p. 5].

One must conclude that it is doubtful whether one can identify a god of spring. Mythological personages named as gods of spring are in fact related to the Black God by origin.

IV. Hittite inscriptions refer to the thunderer as "the weathergod of heaven" [190, p. 37; 615, p. 76]. Sufficient evidence has been quoted above to support the assumption that both the functions of the god effecting thunderstorms and the status of the heavenly god are connected with the older Black God. This applies also to the Hittite god of thunderstorms: veneration of mountains was part of his cult; he was armed with a cudgel or axe and was represented as a bull [615, pp. 77; 678, pp. 81, 87]. The Hittite thundergod Tarhunt is not an essentially Indo-European deity: he was preceded by the Hattian Tar'u represented as a lion. This god inspired fear [190, p. 10]. Even now, thousands of years later, people are afraid of a thunderstorm, although it is not really a fearful phenomenon. The fear is aroused by man's own imagination, rather than by real danger.

The god of thunder figured in the beliefs of other non-Indo-European peoples as well, for example in Mesopotamia, where he was imaged as a bull [678, p. 69]. The American Indian parallel to the Old World's thundergod is the god of rain associated with an axe and a snake and possessing four faces [198, p. 28] (the Indo-European thundergod is also fourfold [197, p. 68], which, as was shown earlier in this book, is typical of the archaic Black God). The Hyksos identified their thundergods Baal and Tešub with the Egyptian earth god Seth.

The Celtic thundergod Taranis is identified with the Roman lord of the underworld Dis, Dis [371b, p. 495]. The Germanic *Donner* and the Celtic *tarann* ('thunder') can be compared to Sumerian *dingir* ('sky') and *tingir* ('river'), Iranian *don*, *dānu* ('river, stream'), and Latin *fons* ('water source'). Consequently, the view of both the thundergod and the heaven god derived from the deity associated with terrestrial waters, the Black God.

Association with stone is among the characteristics of the thundergod. People used to call stone arrows found in the earth "thunder arrows"; stone axes were attributed to Perun, the Slavic thundergod [198, pp. 12, 87, 94]. At the same time, stone also personifies the thundergod's adversary: he splits the tree or breaks the stone under which his antagonist is hiding; a Vedic hymn relates how Indra broke the rock of the serpent Vritra [198, pp. 40, 96].

In one of his studies B. Rybakov established that the Slavic festivity dedicated to Perun fell on the 20th of July [467]. In the Christian calendar that is St. Elias' day. A saying for that day went: "Pray, lest you be killed by thunder." Elias, called thunderer by the people, was prayed to for rain during droughts and for staving off lightning. It was customary in Russia to have communal feasts on that day, during which the sacrificial bull or deer was eaten [597, p. 213]. Elias was popularly portrayed as an awesome god who ruthlessly punished anyone showing insufficient respect for him. In Slavic folk traditions, Elias has features which draw him close to Veles, snakes, and wolves [198, p. 170]. In Greece St. Elias was worshiped on mountain tops. The Greeks especially feared lightning on St. Elias' day. In the Netherlands the 20th of July inspires fear for reasons local inhabitants cannot explain [228c, p. 60, 274].

The Egyptians believed that the world was created during the rise of the star Sirius, which fell on the 20th of July during Classical Antiquity. The Egyptian name of the star is conveyed by the Greek word *seyrlos* meaning 'burning, scorching' (does this recall the name of the thundergod *s.r?*). The constellation of which Sirius is part was called Canis Major, the Dog Star. These data indicate that in Ancient Egypt, too, vague recollections persisted of the deity who created the world, dwelt in heaven, was associated with fire, and was responsible for some events on the 20th of July.

The feast of Neptune, the 23rd of July, is close to that date. One of Apollo's annual holidays was also in July; this feast involved ceremonial fires [829b, pp. 216, 217]. Most probably the early farmers held a festival dedicated to the Black God, more specifically, to his heavenly manifestation responsible for thunderstorms, at the end of July, or in August, as suggested by other evidence.

Various Indo-European peoples pictured the thundergod as mounted, usually on a white or fiery horse, or driving in a chariot. But occasionally he rode a he-goat [198, pp. 82, 83]. The mere fact that he was a rider is not proof of his celestial essence: Poseidon, representing the Black God's aqueous manifestation, was connected with horses, and the Roman underworld god Dispiter was pictured as a rider [662, p. 74]. This may be accounted for by the process of development of religious thinking typical of the history of Indo-European paganism: the Neolithic gods split into fractions which either acquired features satisfying Indo-European tastes, or deteriorated into demons.

It was already mentioned that the hammer was an attribute of the Black God. During the Bronze Age, the hammer was transformed into the axe, and as the Indo-European thundergod was the same as the Neolithic thunderer, i.e., a manifestation of the Black God, he was imagined armed with an axe (Fig. 389: 1, 2). In Slavic mythology the axe brought thunderstorms to mind [138, p. 96] and was treated as a talisman shield from lightning and hail [137, p. 97]. As the axe was a weapon of the thundergod whose origins were in the Black God, further functions of this Neolithic god were also associated with the axe; it was considered to possess fertility powers, it figured in birth, marriage, and funeral rites [137, pp. 87, 98]. The change in the character of the deity, the axe being one of his attributes, affected the implement's symbolic significance: it became a remedy against the devil; the Lithuanians believed that the sun was released from captivity with the help of an axe [693, p. 25].

Beautifully ornamented axes carefully carved from semi-precious stones were found in Troy. Elegant Koban and Colchian axes were not only weapons, they must also have played a certain symbolic role. They may be survivals from the early farmer religion, whose vestiges may have persisted in the mountains of the Caucasus at the end of the Bronze Age (echoes of Neolithic beliefs were still alive in the Caucasus and in Eastern Europe until the beginning of the twentieth century). Signs on Koban axes which seem to be solar symbols (Figs. 35: 5; 39: 3; 44: 1), may also be read as Neolithic heaven symbols. Engraved dogs with odd finlike legs, and snakes, i.e., images of Neolithic mythology, are often seen on these axes.

The notion 'god' in Assyrian cuneiform writing was expressed by a sign designating 'axe.' There is no way of knowing which particular deity the sign initially referred to, the Neolithic earth god or the later White God. Ethnographic evidence of the turn of the twentieth century indicates that the axe or hammer played a symbolic role in marriage rites [434, p. 12; 138, p. 98]; it is not known, however, to which particular deity personifying male fecundity this once referred. Miniature axe amulets were common in medieval Russia [471, p. 405]; they could have been associated with Indo-European cult symbolism or could have been a survival of early farmer beliefs. The Christian festival on the 23rd of April, St. George's day, is marked by the T-sign in Church calendars; this sign must be a schematized representation of the hammer. And George himself, like "the weathergod of heaven," was a variety of the White God with so much black in him that it is hard to understand how he turned white after

The Slavic thundergod had the name Perun (Peruna). He was sometimes opposed to Veles and sometimes mentioned beside him. Both lived on a mountain. All this is clear, Veles was the Black God in charge of the terrestrial sphere (the crops, the cattle, the burial of the deceased), and Perun was the same Black God who rose to heaven and assumed responsibility for thunderstorms. Other attributes of Perun, in addition to mountains and thunder, were the oak tree, stone, and cudgel [200, p. 12], all attributes of the Black God.

The Baltic Perkunas corresponds to the Slavic Perun. In Lithuanian folklore he is portrayed holding an axe or a stone hammer [198, p. 94], or riding across the sky in a chariot driven by a he-goat [693, p. 47]. Perkunas dwelled in heaven where he moved, according to some versions, from earth [198, p. 22] — i.e., he was the Black God who rose to heaven. Eternal fire was maintained as a tribute to Perkunas. The Black God was an awesome deity, and the Prussians fell to their knees and pleaded, "Spare us!" when they heard the sounds of an approaching thunderstorm [829a, p. 531]. Perkunas had four faces turned towards the world's four quarters [198, p. 26]. The fourth day of the week belonged to the Lithuanian Perkunas, Slavic Perun, Indian Indra, Roman Jupiter, and Babylonian Marduk. It is Thursday or Donnerstag, "thunder day," in Germanic languages. As the Black God was a patron of marriage, Thursday was considered appropriate for weddings.

The name of the Balto-Slavic Perun/Perkunas has parallels in the traditions of other peoples. The Rig-Veda mentions the deity Parjanya, "bellowing like a bull," sending down rain and responsible for male sexual potency. The Georgian Pirkuši was a divine patron of blacksmithing; "fiery" was his epithet; he had connections with supernatural forces. The Kafirs (a Hindu Kush people in northeastern Afghanistan) have a god of war named Pärün [613, p. 612]. The Hittite Pirwa was portrayed as a rider on a white horse; his temple was situated on a mountain [198, p. 10]; the wolf, eagle, and stone were his attributes. *Piorun* is the Polish for 'thunder.' In Mordovian mythology the thundergod is called Porghini.

The name Perun can also be compared with the name of the Greek god of the sea, Phorkys, believed to have been the father of the Pleiades [671, p. 82] (the Pleiades are a constellation associated in various myths with particular personages originating from the Black God). An echo of the ancient notion of Phorkys as an underworld god was common in Europe till quite recently: Goethe used the word "phorkus" for Mephistopheles. The Latin word *porcus* ('pig') may be etymologically connected with it.

The name Perun is similar to that of the Teutonic thundergod Fjörgynn. The latter's other name was Frygg. Frygga was his mistress; her name can be compared to that of Phrygia in Asia Minor and Thracia in the Balkans. Teutonic mythology mentions the thundergod Thor in addition to Fjörgynn; but these are two names for the same deity. Thor had features in common with Indra: both were imagined as bulls, they sent down rain, possessed hidden treasures, and received the souls of the deceased [778b, pp. 747-749].

The Thracians had a deity named Percon. *Percole* is the Finnish for 'devil'; the Estonian *põrgu* means 'underworld';

Pecols, Picolos was the Prussian underworld god. The Mari (Upper Volga region) *pirāgu* means 'wolf.' The Parcae were the ancient Roman goddesses of fate. Pariacaca is the thundergod, bestower of fertility, born from an egg, in the mythology of the Yauyo Indians (Peru). Faró is a Nigerian thundergod.

R. Jacobson and V. Ivanov compared the name Perun to the Hittite *perunaš* ('rock') [189, p. 67; 613, p. 611]. The French *pierre* ('stone') may be added here; the name Perun can also be compared to the German *Berg* ('mountain'). The words for 'stone' and 'mountain' are semantically related, being associated with the oldest religious and mythological notions of the earth god.

It seems justifiable, at least semantically, to list here more etymological connections of the name Perun: the Greek *pyr* for 'fire' and 'lightning'; the Persian *pir* for 'old man, patriarch' and a designation for sanctuaries in Western Asia, as well as in Daghestan; the French *pair* for 'peer' and 'pair' (for the Black God was considered a father and was dual). *Pir* is an evil spirit in Tatar mythology. Also belonging here is the Slavic *upyr*, an idol to which sacrifices were offered, as reported in a 12th century chronicle; later this word acquired the meaning of 'vampire,' a demonic creature, the body of a dead person who left his grave at night to suck the blood of the sleeping [521, p. 41]. These words and names apparently stem from the protoform **b.r* already mentioned.

Thus, the Indo-European "weathergod of heaven" is the Neolithic underworld god who rose to heaven and creates thunderstorms.

V. The White God fights the serpent. Yet, strangely, the illustrious hero fighting the "Prince of Darkness" is the latter's double. We saw in the above analysis of the image of Perun that he was originally the underworld god in the function of the thunderer. This thunderer, however, is no longer the serpent causing rainfall; he fights the serpent who strives to delay rain. The heaven god Zeus who presides on Olympus, formerly, it seems, dwelt within the mountain; he is now at war with the Titans, whom he defeats and casts down into the underworld. In another myth, Zeus fights the sea serpent Typhon. The Avestan Ahuramazda is in confrontation with Ahriman, incarnation of darkness. Mithra, having become a sun god, continues the struggle for which he was awarded the title "invincible," though he does not achieve victory. An ancient Indo-European charm against worms (worms and snakes were considered equivalent) appeals to the sun: "May the sun, as it rises, kill the worms" [521, p. 30]. Many ancient graphemes express the worms" [521, p. 30]. The confrontation between the snake and the sun (Fig. 133: 6, 7). The same theme is present in the pictorial motif of a bird fighting a snake (Fig. 132). But the deity manifested as a bird is the former serpent of the underworld who pursued the sun.

The White God is assisted by a horse; the horse, formerly an underworld creature, now exterminates snakes [365, p. 229]. The popular image of the horseman striking the serpent with his spear was canonized as the Christian St. George (Fig. 395: 1). Occasionally it is a wolf [310, p. 149] or a wild boar, instead of the serpent, that George pierces with his spear. In Ancient Egypt, Horus' spear strikes a crocodile [347, p. 33] (Fig. 395: 2). The hero Ilya (Elias) of

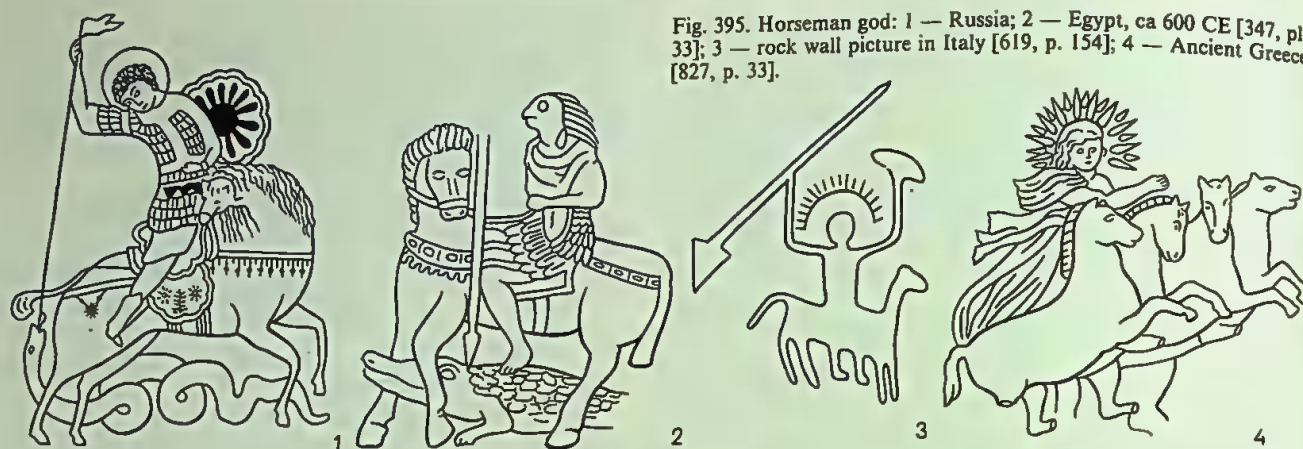


Fig. 395. Horseman god: 1 — Russia; 2 — Egypt, ca 600 CE [347, pl. 33]; 3 — rock wall picture in Italy [619, p. 154]; 4 — Ancient Greece [827, p. 33].

■ Russian epic engages in a combat with a horned serpent. The Slavic thundergod Perun and the Hittite thundergod Tarhunt fight the serpent [190, p. 40]. In the Rig-Veda, Indra appears as a snake fighter: he combats the serpent Ahi who wanted to abduct the sun, and the serpent Vritra who locked up the waters.

The theme of snake-fighting expresses the idea of struggle against the Black God. At the same time, the snake fighter himself has characteristics of the Black God. Sometimes he is threefold, like his adversary the three-headed serpent. Yuriy/George is described as the master of wolves, which is a function of the Black God. In some Slavic fairy tales, the hero, having become a snake fighter, is referred to as born legless; ■ rightly remarked by V. Ivanov and V. Toporov [197, p. 56], the absence of legs indicates the snake; in other words, the snake fighter is none other than the serpent himself.

In the preceding chapter we mentioned a certain Marina who had a love affair with a winged serpent. Another source deals with Maria whose lover is "legless and armless," i.e., the serpent, and his name is Ilya. In a Croatian myth, Juraj [197, pp. 61, 88], i.e., George, is Mara's companion. In a later version of the myth, George overwhelms the serpent and releases the king's daughter Marina. This also indicates that the White God in the role of the snake fighter originated in the serpent, i.e., the Black God.

The Assyro-Babylonian Bel is a typical Black God; but at the same time he is a snake fighter. Bel was honored as the "god of light," while the earthly manifestation of the Black God, personified by the serpent, came to be known ■ the "Prince of Darkness."

Indra has characteristic White God features: he travels in ■ chariot and is armed with ■ spear. But he also has Black God characteristics: he is compared to the bull, associated with the wind, and identified with the incarnation of fire, Agni [778, p. 145]; like Perun, and occasionally Thor, he is armed with a cudgel. Telepinus in the Hittite myth brings gifts from ■ bearded and awesome god named Indar [748, p. 374]. A Ukrainian belief said that deep in the earth there lived ■ gigantic monster called Indra.

In some Slavic fairy tales, the cat, shown above to have been an incarnation of the Black God, figures in a dual function: as an incarnation of the serpent (or his assistant) and ■ a snake fighter [199, p. 112]. The transformation of the Black God into ■ snake fighter even reached Japan: the

already mentioned Susanoo kills the serpent in ■ Japanese myth.

When and why did the Black God split into two characters? A possible assumption might be that this was due to the victory gained by the Proto-Indo-European tribes over the early farming tribes who professed the cult of the Black God and of the Great Goddess. However, the motif of the struggle between the thundergod and the serpent was known to the Hattians, the pre-Indo-European population of Asia Minor [190, p. 9].

The Babylonian Marduk led a war of the gods against an army of monsters, defeated them, and killed their chief Tiamath. This myth, resembling Greek myths about the struggle of Zeus against the Titans and Typhon, dates from the second millennium B.C., i.e., when the influence of Indo-Europeans was felt in Western Asia. But it was preceded by the Sumerian myth accounting how the master of the south wind Ninurta (the south is the direction opposite the north associated with the Black God) defeated the winged dragon Asag by striking him with his spear, and hurled him down to the underworld. The Sumerians had yet another snake fighting myth: Enki fought the serpent Kur, who personified the underground and the world of the dead; when the serpent was defeated, the waters he kept locked up were released [736, p. 78]; this closely resembles Indra's fight against Vritra. Snake fighter myths also include the Egyptian story describing the struggle between the sun god Ra and the serpent Apop, an incarnation of darkness, lying in wait every night when the sun travels underground from west to east and endeavoring to hold it. The enemies of Ra included, besides the serpent, other representatives of the "lower regions": the crocodile, tortoise, and hippopotamus. The legend of the struggle between Ra and Apop has reached us from the period of the New Kingdom (the second half of the second millennium B.C.). The Pyramid Texts (the second half of the third millennium B.C.) deal with the struggle of Ra against the serpent Zoser, ■ "spirit surging from the ground" [347, p. 31].²⁹⁷ The Egyptians had yet another, also quite ancient, version of the motif of the struggle between representatives of the "upper" and "lower" regions: the legend of the fight

²⁹⁷ A powerful pharaoh who lived at the beginning of the third millennium B.C. was named Zoser. This is not the only confirmation of the fact that the ancient Egyptians who worshipped Ra also venerated his antagonist.

between Horus, the heaven god, and Seth, the underworld god. Thus, it was perhaps during the pre-Indo-European period that the notion emerged of the split and subsequent confrontation between the Black God's two manifestations — earthly and heavenly.

Peoples ethnically alien to those who formulated the Neolithic religion borrowed fragments of that religion. This can be seen from the myths of the Sumerians, Elamites, and ancient Egyptians. Some of the groups could have assimilated the heaven goddess as their favorite deity, others the heavenly form of the Black God, still others his earthly or aqueous or fiery forms, or they could have ascribed this function to the deity of vegetation, etc. The myth of the struggle between Horus and Seth is a rather clear reflection of the struggle between Lower and Upper Egypt. The legends of the conflict between Ra and the serpent also express ■ struggle for domination. In one version, a Woman and ■ Snake both combat Ra [384, p. 257]; this very closely resembles a mythological interpretation of a struggle between different religions.

Perhaps it is true that Proto-Indo-Europeans were active in Western Asia as early as the fourth millennium B.C., and it may be under the influence of their religious conceptions that the heavenly form of the Neolithic god was divided from the earthly one, merged with the Indo-European heaven god, and became an adversary of the earth god who personified an alien religion and hostile peoples. The same facts may, however, be interpreted differently: the religion could have become transformed in the sphere of the Neolithic cultures, and the Indo-Europeans later assimilated the new beliefs.

These ancient pagan myths are reflected in the Christian story of the struggle between the god of Light and the representative of Darkness. A late classical author pointed out that the Christian version of the relations between God and Satan resembled myths of the Olympian gods fighting the Titans, and Horus fighting Seth [662, p. 65].

There is yet another widespread type of myth devoted to a struggle against a monster: a hero swallowed by ■ monster kills the monster from within and emerges safely [683, pp. 59-222]. V. Propp explains such myths as allegories of the initiation rite; however, this interpretation seems unconvincing as it leaves much unexplained. It was suggested above that imitation of a man swallowed by a monster was ■ symbolic sacrificial offering, cheating the insatiable man-eater. Some myths mention that when the hero lands in the monster's maw, his hair is singed by the inner heat [683, p. 194]. The hair burns because the monster is the fiery lord of the underworld.

In some myths of this type, the monster, having swallowed the hero, swims from west to east where the hero kills it and sets himself free [683, p. 44]. These legends must be seen as versions of mythological explanations of sunset and sunrise.

Myths about a hero swallowed by a monster and subsequent killing of it are a sub-type of the legend dealing with snake-fighting. Besides, this is a type of legend about ■ struggle against God, since the mythical monster is a god, or at least a former god.

There were also other types of myths about antagonism between gods or between a hero and a god. The oldest are

probably those which include the notion of the thunderstorm as a battle fought between the Black God and the Great Goddess. The battle between these two divinities may be the subject of ■ picture on the wall of an Early Neolithic (dating from the seventh millennium B.C.) sanctuary in Asia Minor, depicting a scene of combat between a human figure armed with a sling, and vultures (Fig. 357:4). This human figure may be ■ hero protecting his people from the bloodthirsty deity. Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods, was not the only hero of ancient legends who dared oppose the mighty lord of the world.

Myths centering on the struggle between gods, against ■ god, or against ■ monster, must have implied, and sometimes explicitly expressed, various motivations of the struggle. Many scholars believe that the ancient motif of the struggle between the horse or the horseman and the snake expressed the conflict between the sun and the underworld [575, p. 258]. This may sometimes be so, but according to available data the snake fighter very rarely represented the solar deity. Quite often the hero fought the serpent in order to deliver the people from bloody tribute, to set free ■ captive woman, or to release locked waters. But in a broader aspect encompassing the entirety of such myths, the struggle was for supremacy. The idea is often found in scholarly publications that myths about good gods struggling against evil forces express a confrontation between culture and chaos, the struggle of man against hostile forces of nature. This idea seems to be an unjustified modernization of myth and allegory. As a matter of fact, we have here a struggle between one's "own" and the "alien," rather than between good and evil.

The myth of Horus and Seth makes it clear that the struggle was for domination in Egypt. Zeus fought the Titans, Marduk Tiamath, Teshub Ullikumi, for power, for the position of "king of heaven." Indo-Europeans invaded the territory of the early farmers to seize land and cattle and to establish their own dominance over the local population; this struggle was represented allegorically ■ ■ fight between the gods worshiped by both sides.

Yet another motif underlay these myths: this was the confrontation between despotism and justice.

A good person or an innocent child may die from a disease; the elements may ruin crops grown by a hard-working farmer. Since everything was believed to be under divine control, an image of a god emerged whose behavior was like that of ■ wild animal: he might tear a person to pieces without pausing to see whether or not the victim had done anything wrong. For thousands of years it seemed to people that the only remedy was to propitiate the senselessly cruel gods. Yet the idea gradually evolved that the misfortunes befalling people could not be undeserved. There emerged the idea of a god who punished only those who deserved punishment for unrighteous deeds, the idea of a just god.

The moods of the time are reflected in the biblical story of how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah as punishment for their inhabitants wickedness (this story is clearly of a pagan nature: God is pictured as a human being who eats, drinks, walks to the object of his deeds, and so on). This is the first case in the history of religion where God punishes immorality. The story shows, however, that

people still doubted God's impartiality during the time when monotheism was still in the making. Abraham importunes God, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This question arises in the human mind, not in the divine one, and man asks justice of God.

The Jews saw a just god in the invisible Almighty. The search for the just god took a different course in other religions. The sun became an incarnation of the just deity. A Sumerian text from the third millennium B.C. reads: "The sun, the justice, is shining; the sun god treads injustice under his foot" [662, p. 88]. It was during that period that the sun god Ra emerged in Egypt, personifying light and, if not justice, at least order, absent in the deeds of the Neolithic gods. Rig-Veda hymns glorify the sun: "There rises the great eye of Mitrá and Varuna, the loved, the faultless one." In Babylon, the sun was addressed with the words: "Oh, Shamash, justice rears its head" [662, pp. 87, 88]. The prophet Malachi announced the coming of the divine "sun of justice." The Avestan Mithra, who came to personify the sun during the period of Classical Antiquity, was given the epithet "just god." The Greeks called Helios faultless (which implies that other gods must have been imperfect). There is no reason to believe that the idea of the good sun god belonged to the Indo-Europeans; they simply upheld it.

It is not difficult to see why the sun god was assigned the role of impartial ruler of the world. From time immemorial the sun had been considered a heavenly eye. Hovering high in the sky and seeing everything, the sun can judge human deeds. In the Rig-Veda the sun sees all human deeds [778, p. 654]. Homer spoke of Helios as seeing and hearing everything. The Romans called the sun "all-seeing god." According to an old Jewish custom trials must be conducted in the light of day. Priests in Heliopolis did not recommend drinking wine in daylight "because your lord and king will see it" [662, p. 97]. The role of a god able to distinguish righteous deeds could have been attributed to the sun not only because it was a heavenly eye, but also owing to the circumstance that it was a source of light, and one could see things in the light of day which can be hidden in the dark.

The concept of the just god was adopted and advanced by Christianity. The Essenes, predecessors of the Christians, venerated the sun as an incarnation of the just god. Christ was referred to as "the sun of justice," "the just king." Satan was "the prince of lawlessness."

The serpent, which had been consistently slain by the White God for at least two thousand years, was still alive when Christianity took shape. He was not only alive, but retained his influence, despite having been overthrown as lord of the world. Christianity waged uncompromising war against the Black God. Origen, an early Christian author, wrote: "One cannot be a friend of Christ and of the snake at the same time; friendship with Christ implies animosity towards the snake" [66, p. 119].

Christianity conceived the idea of doing away with the Black God. It had means at its disposal more effective than the spear of the rider on the white horse. To begin with, it had a written doctrine. Then, there was a strictly established ritual.

It was not just paganism that Christianity opposed, but a particular ethic. Christianity itself was abundantly saturated with elements of paganism, but it put forth certain principles which demanded intransigence towards the religion of the Black God. These principles — justice, distinction between good and evil, the notion of sin — are the cornerstone of morality. The idea was not new, it was legitimized in Judaism, but now it was put into practice. The practical activity of the movement aimed at putting an end to injustice by way of mass conversions to the new faith.

Neolithic religion reflected a level of notions on human behavior which did not recognize moral restrictions. Neolithic gods were not guided by rules of conduct or principles. They were bloodthirsty, lewd, senseless, cruel, and wayward — a whole gamut of adverse human qualities not governed by notions of the permissible or the forbidden. These notions, however, were shaping in human society. Misfortunes and well-being were still thought to depend on divine power, but a conviction was taking shape that a god had to conform to moral principles.

The Egyptian sun god could not compete with rivals who were supported by archaic tradition. But in Mesopotamia he was acquiring increasingly great significance. He became transformed from the Sumerian "lord of the people" into a Babylonian law-giver. Legislation is a controlling factor in social order in opposition to arbitrary rule. People wanted the vital laws to be based on justice, and consequently a god was invented to ensure that justice triumphed.

What role did the beliefs and ethic principles of the ancient Indo-Europeans play in all this? There is no way of knowing, for there is no evidence leading to a definite conclusion. The Rig-Veda is permeated with the governing role of Mitrá-Varuna; he sees everything and requites everyone according to his deserts. But in order to win the god's favors one need not perform good deeds and avoid evil ones; it is only necessary to obey the deity and the order established by the deity. The notion of cosmic order must have been the element, intellectual rather than ethical, which the Indo-Europeans contributed to the development of ancient ideological principles.

It is doubtful whether Proto-Indo-Europeans had notions of good and evil, if one takes into account the hypothetical cultural level of the Ancient Kurgan tribes, or the older Kura-Araksians, suggested by archeological evidence and the general cultural level of that epoch. However, they must have had something else which played an enormous role in the foundation of European culture.

Data on the characteristics of the religion and art of early farming tribes suggest that emotional and sensual traits prevailed in their psychology.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, Proto-Indo-Europeans, whose material and aesthetic culture was inferior to that of the early farmers, were more given to logical thinking, rationality, order, discipline. The characteristics of the Black God and Great Goddess must have disgusted them, not because these gods were cruel (there is no ground to believe that Proto-Indo-Europeans were less cruel than the bearers of the Neolithic religion), but because they were cantankerous. Neolithic gods reflect

²⁹⁸ See chapter "Ornamental Style."

a human type whose deeds are unpredictable, something intrinsically alien to Europeans. The European expects to see logic, continuity, and order in all things. It was in this, and not in natural goodness, that the psychological principles of a just god found rich soil in the Indo-European medium, even if they did not emerge from it. Control, order, logic, and sober discipline were typical of the culture of ancient Europe. But these qualities were applied in practical life and common sense; their effect on religion was negligible. Ancient Greek myths are a haphazard scrapbook of what was left from the Neolithic religion. They express psychological traits of the older society. It would be useless to look for logic, common sense, or moderation in them. The notions of good and evil, of justice, of what one may or may not do, are alien to the Greek gods. It is not easy to find these notions in other Indo-European mythologies — ancient Indian, Roman, and Teutonic. As for the Avesta, it was not a spontaneously shaped religion, but a structured doctrine.

Moral concepts took form gradually. With the exception of Zoroastrianism and Judaism, in ancient times they

developed mainly in nonreligious spheres, like common sense and philosophic thought. But need for a fundamental religious reform was arising. The idea of a just ruler of the world, of a "sun of justice," took root in Christianity, which dealt a final blow to paganism.

The idea was not implemented. Though Christianity took hold, the kingdom of good deeds and justice did not ensue. From the point of view of these moral categories, the medieval Christian world turned out no better than the ancient one and much inferior to it on the level of material and spiritual culture. Christianity never kept its promise. The ideas of humanism were conceived during the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment; these ideas were based on knowledge, not faith. The nineteenth century was the culmination of the optimistic hope that wisdom would be the force establishing the triumph of justice in the world. This hope was based on the unjustified extrapolation of the capacity of part of the people for good judgement onto all mankind. People are generally more prone to recklessness and belief in mirages, as the twentieth century has so vividly demonstrated.

ORNAMENTAL STYLE

Ornaments in Daghestan come in a variety of styles. The ethnographer E. Shilling, who studied Caucasian cultures, pointed out that two main styles can be distinguished in Daghestan decorative art: that represented mainly by vegetal ornaments related to the art of Azerbaijan and adjacent Western Asian countries, and geometrical ornamentation in the highlands. The earliest known monuments of the former type date from the 12th—13th centuries, the latter reach back to the remote past [598, pp. 46, 47].

Yet it is commonly held that "oriental" ornament is typical of Daghestan. There are several reasons for this misunderstanding. First, after relations between Daghestan and the Islamic countries were strengthened through their shared religion, it became customary to maintain that Daghestan had been a cultural province of Asia. Second, what outside observers primarily see is not the art of the highlands difficult of access, but of the coastal zone whose culture is in fact related to Western Asia. Third, some scholars have restricted themselves to studying the rich and variegated culture of the region on the basis of individual examples which, however, are frequently not indicative. Fourth, movable objects, such as utensils, weaponry, and embellishments, naturally figure in museum exhibits; in



Fig. 396. Daghestan, 19th c. grave stelae with ornaments in three styles: 1 — vegetal; 2 — plaiting; 3 — geometrical.



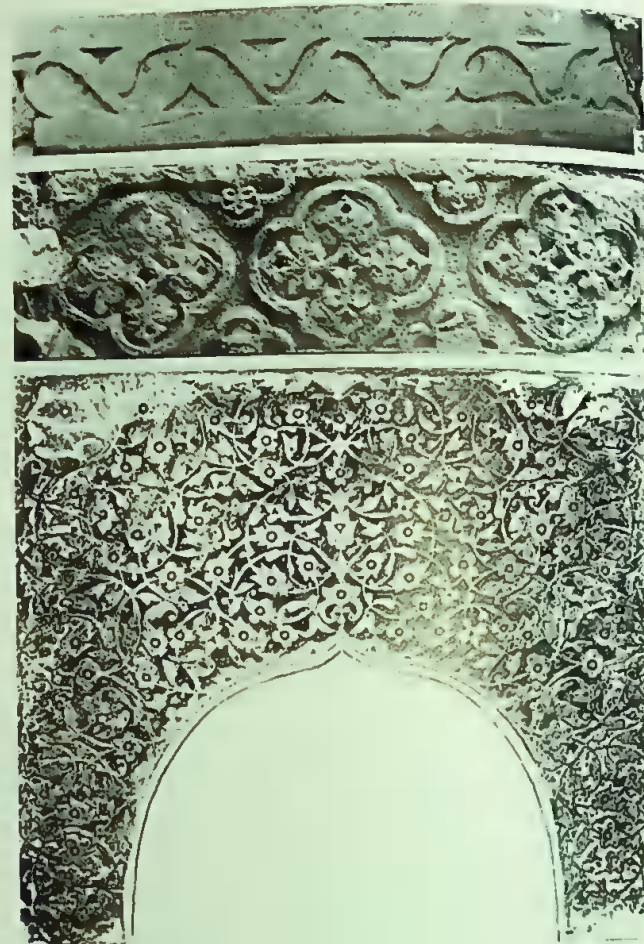
Fig. 397. Daghestan jewelry artifacts: 1 — dagger scabbard ornamentation; 2 — woman's belt buckle.



Fig. 398. Vegetal ornament in Daghestan architecture: 1 — carved stone framing of a mosque door [301, p. 46]; 2—5 — specimens of architectural ornament in Kubachi.



Fig. 399. Architectural ornament in the Middle East and Central Asia: fragment of a carved mosque door in Turkestan, 14th c.



these, the ornamentation typical of the Southern Caucasus and Western Asia is fairly general, while the architecture represents indigenous local traditions.

Three styles can be identified in the architectural ornaments of Daghestan; they differ in motif and in the character of the design, in composition and technique of fashioning (Fig. 396). These differences are due to their dissimilar origins.

Vegetal design. Ornaments with plant motifs originating in oriental art (Fig. 397) prevail in the decoration of utensils, weaponry, and other artifacts. Vegetal ornamentation is common on grave stelae of recent centuries [141, pp. 96-101]; sometimes, though rarely, it is also found in architecture (Fig. 398: 1). Such ornaments are characterized by stylized vegetal configurations, exquisitely curved elements, rhythmicity and regularity of compositional arrangement. They are typical of the medieval and more recent art of Western and Central Asia (Fig. 399).

This type of ornament is not common in the architecture of Daghestan (meaning traditional vernacular architecture). With the exception of the village of Tsakhur, whose architectural decoration reveals the direct influence of neighboring Azerbaijan, and to a certain extent the Caspian coastal zone, plant ornamentation in Daghestan architecture is typical only of the village of Kubachi. Buildings in Kubachi are of the same architectural type as in the rest of Daghestan, but deeply carved bas-reliefs were produced here during the Middle Ages, and it is only in Kubachi



Fig. 400. Carving of "plaiting" type in Daghestan: 1 — window frame type common in district of Tabasaran; 2 — fragment of a carved wooden partition in district of Ghidatl.

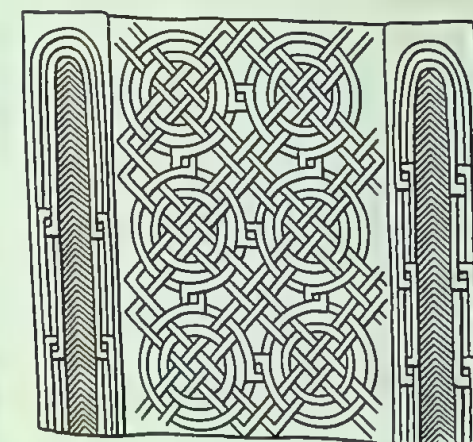


Fig. 401. Comparison of ornamental patterns: 1 — grave stela of ca 1800 in Daghestan (district of Kaitag); 2 — 11th c. church window in Georgia.



that one can see fireplaces with a Near Eastern type of ornament, and mannered bolsters decorated with plant motifs (Fig. 398: 2-5).

Vegetal ornamentation, formed in Mesopotamia and Iran during the Bronze Age, exerted a significant influence on the decorative art of Europe and the Caucasus since the early centuries of the Christian era. As a result, it almost completely replaced the geometrical ornament of Eastern Europe, Russia, and Georgia.²⁹⁹ In Daghestan it spread much later, mainly in the 19th century, with the exception of Kubachi, where the Near Eastern tradition of decorative art was assimilated earlier. The specific character of artistic culture in this village is due to the traditional

²⁹⁹ In Russia, geometrical ornament was gradually ousted by vegetal designs, beginning from the 10th century adoption of Christianity [471, p. 406], under the influence of Byzantine art.

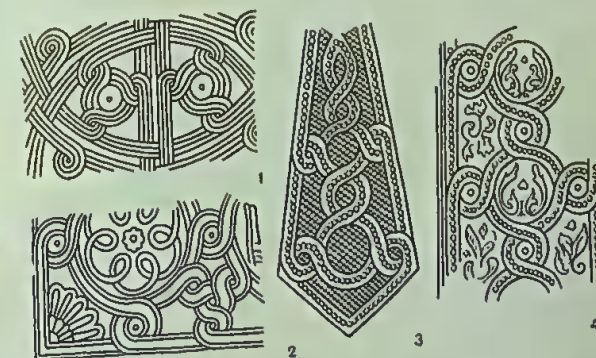


Fig. 402. Similar "plaiting" motifs: 1 — fragment of a grave stela, Daghestan, ca 1700; 2 — carved slab from St. Sophia cathedral in Kiev, 11th c.; 3 — Alanian amulet, North Ossetia, 10th c. [269, p. 13]; 4 — fragment of a plaster relief, Iraq, 8th c. [622, p. 59].

crafts of its inhabitants. The Kubachi villagers have been famous since the early Middle Ages as craftsmen mainly of side arms and jewelry. They adopted the production methods and artistic traditions of the Western Asian countries closest to the Caucasus. "The artistic culture of the Kubachians can be traced mainly to the East, to Iran, Turkey, and Arabia," wrote E. Shilling [600, p. 465]. Research conducted by A. Ivanov of the Leningrad Hermitage shows that the ancestors of the Kubachians included people of Eastern Turkish extraction, and that this circumstance resulted in the formation of a center of medieval Near Eastern decorative art in Daghestan.

Religion played a significant part in shaping the character of ornamentation of carved stone grave stelae in Daghestan: craftsmen here made stelae in forms common in the neighboring Islamic regions, mainly Azerbaijan.

Wickerwork design. Another type of ornament used in Daghestan for decor of architectural details is a shallow two-dimensional carving representing wickerwork (Fig. 400). It consists of interweaving bands forming circles, squares, rhombuses, zigzags, and stripes. Carvings of this type cover broad window and door frames, pillars with distinctive trapezoid capitals, and grave stelae.

The wicker ornament is evident in a limited region of Daghestan, mainly Tabasaran and Kaitag. There are numerous specimens of wood carving in this style, well preserved and with distinct outlines; they do not seem too old, some were made in the 19th century. Occasionally one can see older wicker designs, for example, on the door of a mosque in the village of Varsit, and pillars of mosques in the villages of Kurag and Ashty; judging by the condition of the wood, they must be several hundreds of years old. The carved design on a door frame in a mosque in Varsit is the same as on a door in Richa, probably dating from the 12th century.

It may be assumed that wickerwork ornament appeared in Daghestan between the 12th and 15th centuries. It was apparently not until the 17th—18th centuries that this carving came into use for stone grave stelae (it could have been borrowed from earlier specimens of wood carving).

The following may be stated with confidence: 1) Wickerwork ornamentation was introduced in Daghestan at a single time in its fully developed form; 2) It was borrowed from the Southern Caucasus. Indeed, a comparison between Kaitag and Tabasaran architectural ornaments and Georgian and Armenian patterns (Fig. 401) reveals their close resemblance. Similarity between wickerwork ornamentation in Daghestan and the Southern Caucasus can be discerned not only in the designs, but even in parallel details [602, pp. 62, 75, 84].

Wickerwork ornament was popular in Byzantium. From there it spread to the Caucasus, Europe, and Russia. This explains the striking similarity between some Russian elements and those of Western Europe [770, Table 56] and the Northern Caucasus (Fig. 402). "Wickerwork" similar to that of Tabasaran, Georgia, and Armenia can be encountered on medieval Muslim structures in Asia Minor, i.e., the former Byzantine territory [806, p. 13].

Geometrical design. Thus, vegetal and wickerwork ornaments first appeared in Daghestan during the Middle Ages. Geometrical ornament developed there much earlier.

A surviving ancient specimen of such carving is in a style preserved as an ornamental tradition till quite recently (Fig. 403: 2). This example may point to the deep roots and persistent continuity of an old tradition. But even without this isolated find, the frequent occurrence of geometrical ornament throughout the mountains of the Greater Caucasus, and its dominance in architecture (especially in old structures and, in particular, in the remote highlands) suggest that this ornamental type is intrinsic in the archaic stratum of local artistic culture. The geometric style was the principal one in the vernacular architecture of Daghestan, especially in the mountains, until the early 20th century, unlike the plant or wickerwork ornaments. It is indigenous, assimilated by local artistic culture in ancient times; geometrical ornament in Daghestan decorates ceramics and metal artifacts since the second millennium B.C. [35, pp. 96-161; 255, pp. 179-187; 322, pp. 44-49; 420, pp. 85-138].

During the Middle Ages the coastal regions of Daghestan, where Islam was then spreading, were exposed to cultural influences of Western Asia. The Kubachians and craftsmen of other localities took market tastes into account, patterned in accordance with that culture. However, in Inner Daghestan, in the mountain areas, the original material and spiritual culture, quite different from what is usually implied by the notion "oriental," persisted.

In the Caucasus highlands local master builders did not have to satisfy the wants of a market subject to the influence of fashion and foreign tastes. Their art was meant for their own people, related to them by blood, spirit, and culture. Despite contacts with the surrounding world, despite the fact that Christianity and Islam found their way to Inner Daghestan in the 11th—14th centuries, the mountain dwellers lived in a stable atmosphere of their traditional culture. The architecture of highland Daghestan, unaffected by external influences, followed its own course of development and remained unique until the 19th century.

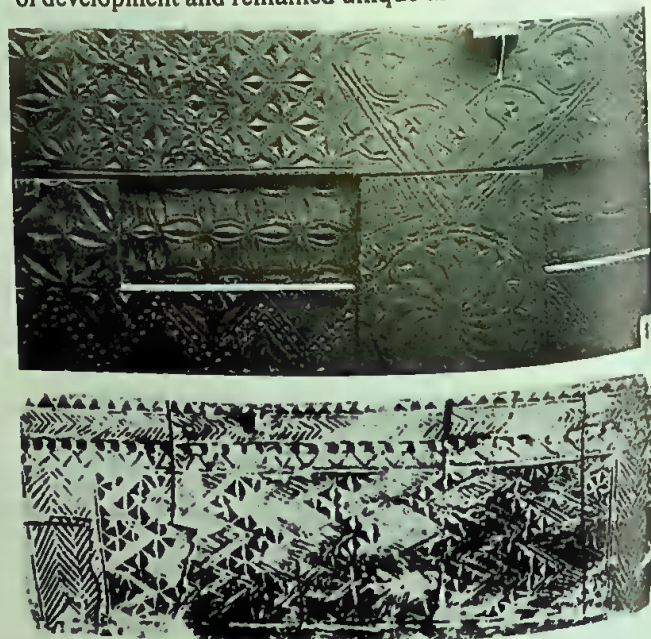


Fig. 403. Carved wooden ornament in Daghestan: 1 — fragment of a chest, 19th c.; 2 — board of a box found in a tomb near Buinaksk, ca 1000 BC.

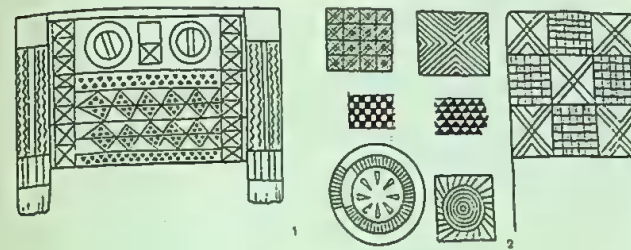


Fig. 404. Wood carving in Checheno-Ingushetia: 1 — chest; 2 — elements of ornament [386; 538]; 3 — fragment [330, p. 95].

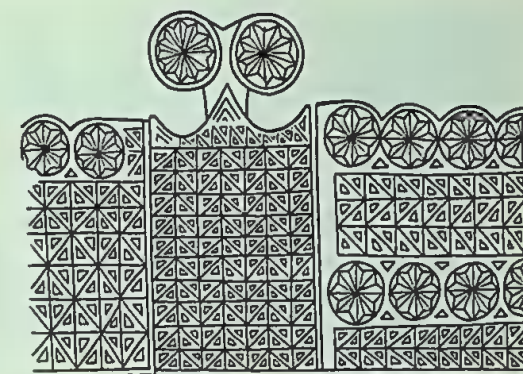
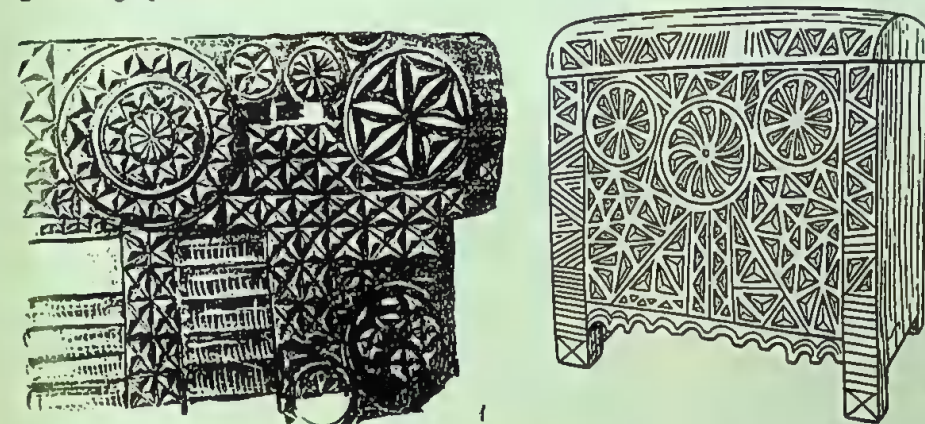


Fig. 405. Wood carving in North Ossetia: fragments (according to a drawing, 1935).

Fig. 406. Triangular carving, 16th—18th centuries: 1 — Daghestan; 2 — Georgia [642b, p. 726].

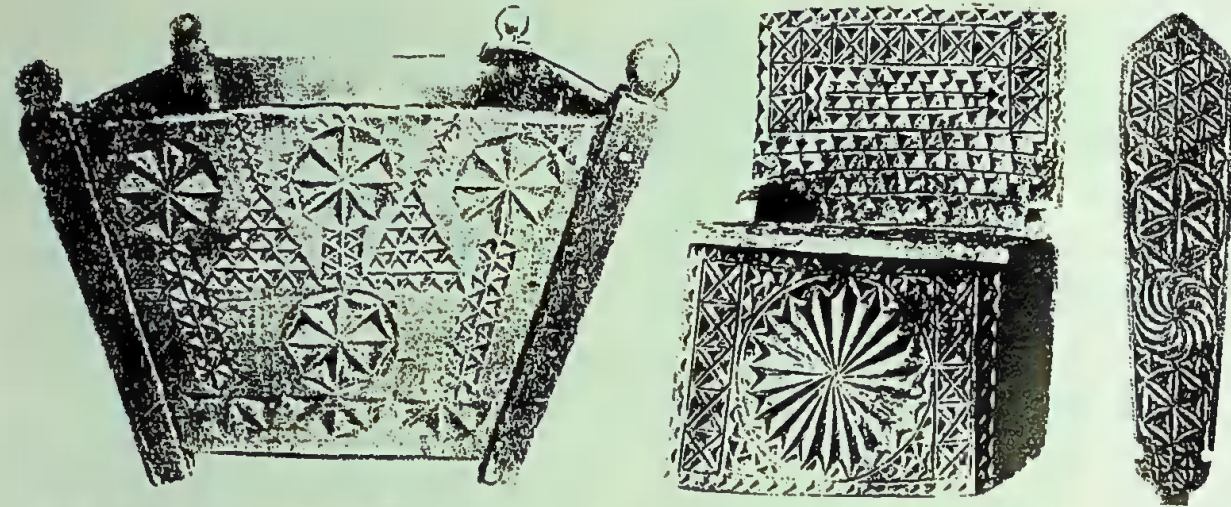


This was not only due to the conservatism of the mountain dwellers or their resistance to alien cultural influences. An essential reason for the preservation of the old architectural ornamental style by mountain dwellers of the Northeastern Caucasus was that there was little change in the functional role of the ornamentation, in contrast to what was happening in other places. Architectural ornament in Daghestan and Chechenia did not become purely decorative until the Middle Ages, in contrast to the Southern Caucasus, Europe, and Asia. It remained symbolic, although it had lost its initial semantics. It was stable, like the inviolable traditions of culture and mode of life.

The unique indigenous style of Daghestan architectural ornaments can easily be recognized. Its distinctive features are: irregularity of the general composition; geometrical patterns; large, clear-cut elements, each figuring separately without being connected or interwoven; bold deep carving on the plane. A characteristic feature of this ornamentation is the absence of rapport, i.e., of rhythmic arrangement of identical elements. Patterns in mountainous Daghestan ornament consist of figures compositionally independent not only in their design, but also in arrangement within the whole. The compositions are made up of various motifs, occurring freely among one another, and consisting of a set of simple figures: rosettes, squares, triangles, crosses, zigzags, spirals, etc.

Carved wooden ornaments in Checheno-Ingushetia and North Ossetia were geometrical in style, judging by the few specimens preserved (Figs. 404, 405). There was almost no stone carving in these regions (with the exception of linear engravings in Chechenia, mainly in places adjacent to Daghestan) until the 17th—18th centuries when Muslim grave stelae appeared. Neither were there ornamented ceramics or metalwork in the region during the Middle Ages. The same might have been the case in ancient and early medieval Daghestan. The enigmatic absence of a development ancient and early medieval decorative art and its appearance in abundance from the 12th century onwards, when stone carving came to be used, resulted in obviously ancient symbols being represented in relatively recent work.

Geometrical ornament in Daghestan resembles archaic carving in Georgia (Fig. 406), and also in Russia (Fig. 407), East and West Europe [633, Tables 3, 23; 634, Figs. 3-5; 673a, Table 339], the Baltic region, and Scandinavia (Fig. 408). The roots of this kinship between artistic cultures may go back to the second millennium B.C. That period saw mass migrations from the Eastern European plains to the mountains of the Greater Caucasus. Ornaments, triangular-indent in technique and geometrical in pattern, were typical of archaic decorative art from Western Europe to Central Asia, including the mountains of the Greater Caucasus, i.e., in the zone of the Bronze Age dissemination



of ancient Indo-European tribes. These ornaments, so similar among peoples presently so dissimilar, should be considered a cultural survival of that ancient period. The affinity between ornaments of this style is indicated by astonishingly similar examples from Central Asia to Central Europe. In archaic Greece (first half of the first millennium B.C.), there was ornamental carving of the type commonly encountered in the mountains of the Greater Caucasus (Fig. 343: 1).

This style of ornament, referred to conventionally as "geometrical," is characteristic only of Western Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe. Outside that territory, ornamentation acquired an entirely different character (Fig. 409). It is noteworthy that the area of the geometrical ornament coincides with that of the ancient cult symbolism complex analyzed in this book.

Geometrical ornament is typical of out-of-the-way regions of Daghestan. As one approaches the seacoast, the plant style of ornamentation increasingly prevails. The same phenomenon is observed in other places in the Caucasus. Ethnographer G. Chitaya says, "two principal types of ornamentation on wood can be identified in Georgian folk art: a) mountainous ... mainly with geometrical designs and b) lowland ... mainly with plant and animal motifs. In addition to the motifs, these ornamental styles differ in the technique of fashioning (by deep carving and plastic relief)" [586, p. 321]. A similar phenomenon is observed in Azerbai-

jan. Decorative art there, including architectural ornament, is generally close to the artistic culture of medieval Iran. In Northern Azerbaijan, however (in mountains within the Greater Caucasus range), a different type of ornamentation is encountered, with bold patterns of geometrical motifs

[15, p. 101]. A similar situation is typical of the Ukraine, where geometrical ornament in folk art prevails in the north and vegetal ornament elsewhere; the farther south, the clearer the predominance and the more refined the forms of plant ornamentation [95, p. 323].

The technique of carving geometrical ornament in wood consists of cutting hollows with an inclined instrument. This method is to a certain degree due to the convenience of wood working, but is not entirely conditioned by it; wood carving may be completely different in character. In the Far East, Polynesia, Africa, and the Americas, where ornamental style differs sharply from both the geometrical and the vegetal types (Fig. 409), the carving resembles neither Caucasian and European, nor Western Asian; and the indented triangular carving technique is not characteristic of those regions [630]. In Daghestan, one can also find wooden artifacts decorated in different styles (Fig. 410). Likewise, archaic eastern Slavic wood ornamentation, which in the 19th century still survived in some parts of Northern Russia and in the Transcarpathian Ukraine, was superseded in the 17th and 18th centuries by luxuriant plant decoration.

In Daghestan, ornamental carving done by slanted

Inner Daghestan proceeded to regular ornamental compositions, not without the influence of outside artistic cultures. A stone carved in the transitional style found in the Avarian village of Machada is typical in this respect (Fig. 412). The ornament is still largely archaic: rudiments of symbolic signs along with purely ornamental forms can be discerned in the design, and what is even more significant, traditional compositional devices are still present. The latter is expressed in violations of symmetry and framing, while the master does his best to apply novel compositional devices to which he is not accustomed.

The design consists of five parts, all different, each as if independent of the others. The line round the design could be a frame, but it outlines only three sides of the picture. The field is divided into irregular parts. A quadrangular area is cut off on the right and, as a result, a square is produced; this square should logically have been divided into four equal and mutually symmetrical parts; however, this is not the case. The figure in the right section seems to be framed, but this is an illusion: in fact, it is not a frame, but two vertical stripes with insertions between them at the top and below. The upper right rosette is covered not by diametral, but radial lines which divide the disk into sectors of different size, lacking symmetry. The lower left rosette is expressly asymmetrical; the carver clearly wished to draw a figure in a novel manner, but his style betrays that he was not yet used to regular geometric constructions.

Asymmetry, irregularity, freedom in the arrangement of elements were typical of European and Western Asian Neolithic art (Fig. 413). In terms of these compositional characteristics, Daghestan decorative art compares to the art of the early farmers.

Thus, two different sources are reflected in the style of Daghestan architectural ornament: the technique is part of the artistic traditions of ancient Indo-Europeans, whereas the compositional principles continue the almost extinct line descending from the aesthetics of another cultural stratum, the world of the Neolithic farmers. In terms of composition, the decorative art of Daghestan is in fact the last phenomenon of Neolithic aesthetics. The most vivid examples of this aesthetics are the art of the Tripolye-Cucuteni culture and the art of Ancient Crete, but it was also typical of other early farmer cultures.

Compositional principles of decorative art changed in Europe and in the Caucasus at the beginning of the Bronze Age, and in Western Asia somewhat earlier, in the Aeneolithic period. The ornament lost its plasticity and naturalness, became more "regular", balanced, more monotonous compositionally, drier. Artistic expressiveness gave way to rationality of arrangement.

While such changes in the art of Western Asia may be accounted for by the tyranny of dogmatism which set in there, in Europe they were due to other factors.

Ornament among tribes who were bearers of the Ancient Kurgan culture, i.e., Proto-Indo-Europeans, had several remarkable peculiarities, namely, patterns were far from varied, compositions were regular, and the technique of fashioning involved punching. The bearers of higher level early farmer cultures did not hit on the idea of regular compositional arrangement or of punched ornament. Apparently, Proto-Indo-European tribes differed from the early farming ones in their ethnic psychology: reasoning was more inherent in the former, while the latter were more emotional.



Fig. 413. Irregular ornamental compositions, Neolithic: 1 — Ireland [719, p. 230]; 2 — Central Europe [259, p. 62]; 3 — France [659a, p. 604]; 4 — Rumania [719, p. 291]; 5—8 — Asia Minor [764b, pp. 389, 395, 291, 345].

CONCLUSION

Man of the modern physical type is believed to have appeared 50 to 40 thousand years ago [221, p. 98]; this event heralds the Upper Paleolithic, i.e., the last stage of the Early Stone Age. Art first emerged at this period; there are some indications, though, that attempts at a representational, and also symbolic reflection of reality were undertaken even by Neanderthal man, predecessor and in part contemporary of early modern man [508; 535; a.o.].

The Magdalenian period of the Upper Paleolithic (15th to 10th millennia B.C.) saw the artistic flourishing of the Early Stone Age. Animal images on cave walls and ceilings or engraved on stone and bone artifacts, which have reached us from that remote age of human history, reveal a high level of artistic accomplishment.

Although the human race inhabited all the continents during the Upper Paleolithic epoch, monuments of that period have so far been found only within the area extending from Spain to Lake Baikal and Hindustan. That art was not only figurative, or, as some scholars call it, "realistic." Beside pictorial and sculptural representations of nature, there emerged an ornamentation based on nonrepresentational symbolism; there were also symbols which did not develop into ornaments.

The graphic symbolism of the Upper Paleolithic shows that religious conceptions during that epoch surpassed elementary magic and primitive animism. Moreover, the fact that mammoth and bison hunters venerated snakes, birds, and trees suggests that they had myths dealing with heaven and earth, with the structure and patterns of the universe.

Twelve to ten thousand years ago, a warmer climate set in on the globe. Glaciers enveloping the north of Eurasia melted and retreated. Natural conditions changed drastically. The territory where the oldest relics of art were found was largely cold steppe, abounding in mammoths, bison, and wild horses during the glacial epoch; people pursued them, drove them into traps and killed them with stones or spears. But when the glaciers withdrew, this territory became covered with humid forests. Large animals, and with them the battue hunting which had provided the economic basis of life for primitive communities, disappeared. New tribes moved northwards from the south, from Africa and Western Asia, where the climate grew hot and arid. During that epoch, the Mesolithic (9th to 6th millennia B.C.), people subsisted on gathering, fishing, and hunting mainly small game. The bow and arrow were invented, the dog was domesticated.

The rich representational art of the Upper Paleolithic almost disappeared during the Mesolithic. Drawings became conventionalized, schematic, as it were, cursory. It is frequently stated in the literature that naturalistic art gave way to the abstract with the transition from Paleolithic to Mesolithic. This, however, is an unjustified generalization. Nonrepresentational art was already in existence during the Paleolithic (there were symbolic ornaments and stylized

statuettes). And in the Mesolithic, representational art, having degenerated in Western Europe, spread in various parts of Asia and Africa.

Magdalenian nature-imitating art in what are now France and Spain can justifiably be called a rich outburst of artistic genius. This phenomenon was not necessarily due to social and economic conditions, as other groups of the same period lived under identical conditions without creating such art. Representational art as well as later assimilated by peoples whose living conditions were entirely different. A leading Soviet archeologist specializing in ancient art, A. Okladnikov, wrote concerning changes in the artistic culture of Europe which occurred with the termination of the Paleolithic epoch: "In all probability, the cause really lies in the radical alteration of the ideology and world perception of people as a result of transition from the appropriative hunting-gathering economy to the producing one — agriculture and cattle breeding" [417, p. 4]. This statement is simply striking. The changes in art discussed here occurred several thousand years before agriculture and cattle breeding emerged. But even if we accept this, so to speak, inaccuracy aside, how and why, by the force of what factors did the above changes in economy lead to stylization and symbolism in art? Advocates of the dependence of artistic forms on economic activity leave this question unanswered.

In the Near East since the 12th—8th millennia B.C. and in Southeastern Europe since the 7th millennium B.C., people began the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture and cattle breeding. Ceramic production and spinning were invented. There ensued the New Stone Age or the Neolithic. It was at that time and region that a cult symbolism, whose origins can be traced back to the Paleolithic, took shape. This symbolic art expressed cult and mythological concepts whose origins also go back to the Paleolithic. It went on flourishing during the Aeneolithic (the Copper-Stone Age which may be regarded as the last stage of the Neolithic, in the fourth to third millennia B.C.).

It is hard to follow the history of symbolism. The reason is that during the Mesolithic and Neolithic, and also largely during the Bronze Age, short-lived materials such as tree bark, raw leather, wood, clay wall plastering, unstable dyes, etc., were used for making images.³⁰⁰ The same disappearance of documentation affects the history of writing. The oldest examples of hieroglyphic writing which have reached us (Sumerian from the fourth millennium B.C., Egyptian from the end of the fourth millennium B.C., Proto-Indian from the third millennium B.C., and Chinese from the second millennium B.C.) are already quite formed. Writing was known during the Neolithic and

³⁰⁰Present-day primitive tribes represent graphic symbols similarly. "These were most often applied to ephemeral media such as the human body, the ground, sheets of bark, and wooden shields" [649, p. 476].

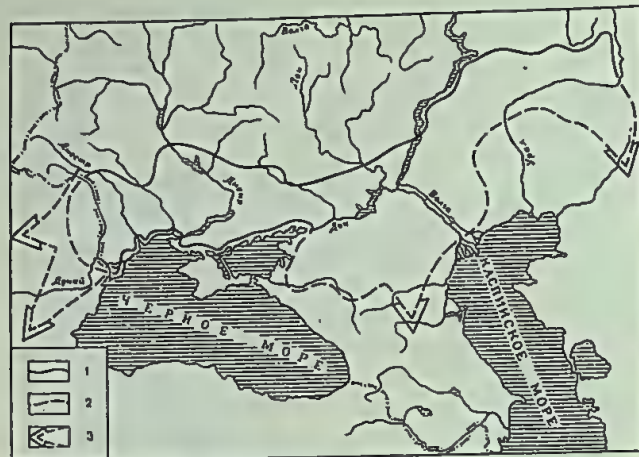


Fig. 414. Kurgan culture region [352, fig. 1]: 1 — defined boundaries of the area; 2 — supposed boundaries of the area; 3 — direction of invasions into other areas.

Aeneolithic, but almost nothing written survived from that period [222, p. 73].

The Bronze Age (in Western Asia since the end of the fourth millennium B.C., in Europe since the beginning of the second millennium B.C.) was a period of reinterpretation, unification, and wide propagation of Neolithic cult symbolism. Symbols were becoming more stable in form. Most examples of ancient symbolism that we now possess date back to that time. Later, during the Iron Age (the first half of the first millennium B.C.), symbols came to be used less and less. It was then that their meaning seems to have begun to fade from memory. They were still used for a long time, but already as ornaments or as sacred signs fixed by tradition.

Ancient symbolism, and the more so its later ornamental interpretation, is a stratification of motifs pertaining to different epochs and interweavings of themes of dissimilar ethnocultural origin. Under these conditions, it is difficult to establish a chronological sequence of the evolution of symbols and the geographical paths of their propagation. Still, a general idea of their genesis and evolution can be formed.

Nearly all symbols of the European and Western Asian region emerged or took shape in the environment (specific, but presently of unknown ethnic definition) of early farmer cultures. As cattle breeding tribes from the Black Sea and Caspian steppe (Fig. 414) invaded Europe, and Semites spread in Western Asia, the cult and mythological conceptions and languages of the newly formed peoples changed. The graphic symbolism of the Neolithic farmers' religion was adapted to new religious conceptions.

It is doubtful that Proto-Indo-Europeans had their own cult symbolism before that time. Ornaments on Ancient Kurgan pottery, manufactured by settlers of the Black Sea and Caspian steppes in the third millennium B.C., are poor in motifs, inexpressive. Moreover, the ornamentation is not symbolic, but generally exhibits a manufacture origin. On many vessels there are grooves which imitate or are imprints of cords around the body of the vessel (Fig. 415). Other vessels bear designs apparently produced by ligatures which bound parts of clayware pieces together

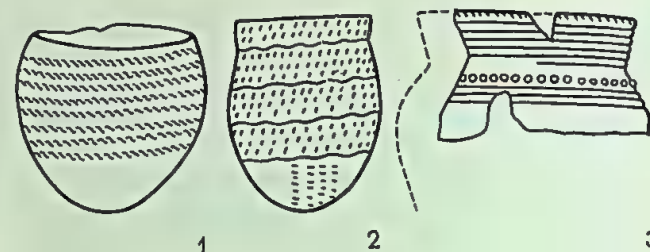


Fig. 415. Kurgan culture pottery: 1—3 — imitation of ties [352, figs. 13, 12; 285, p. 83].

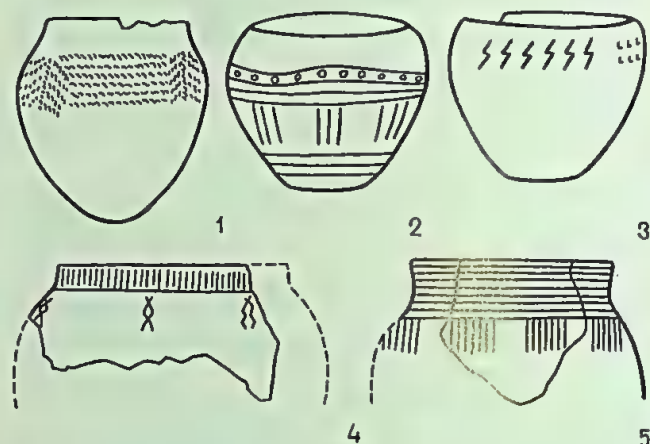


Fig. 416. Kurgan culture pottery: 1—5 — imitation of fastenings [352, figs. 13, 15, 14; 285, p. 100].

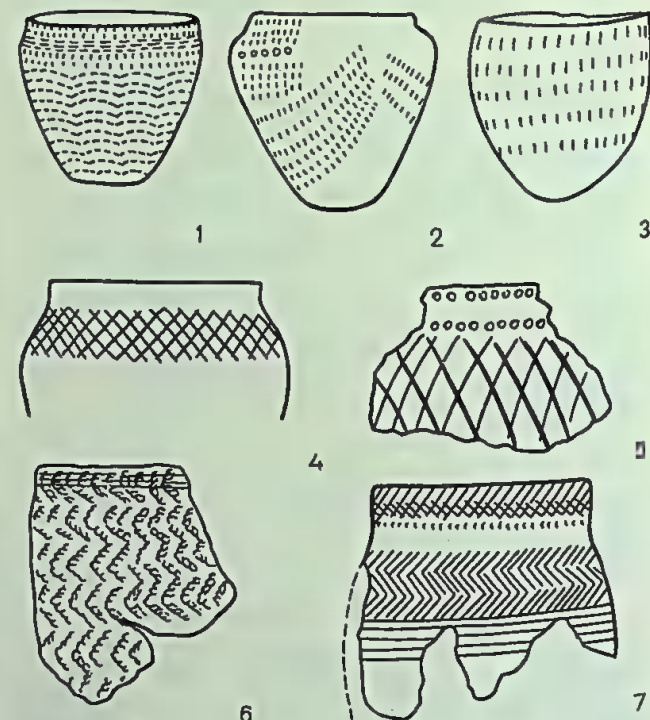


Fig. 417. Kurgan culture pottery: 1—7 — imitation of plaitings [352, figs. 15, 14; 285, pp. 100, 83, 89, 86].

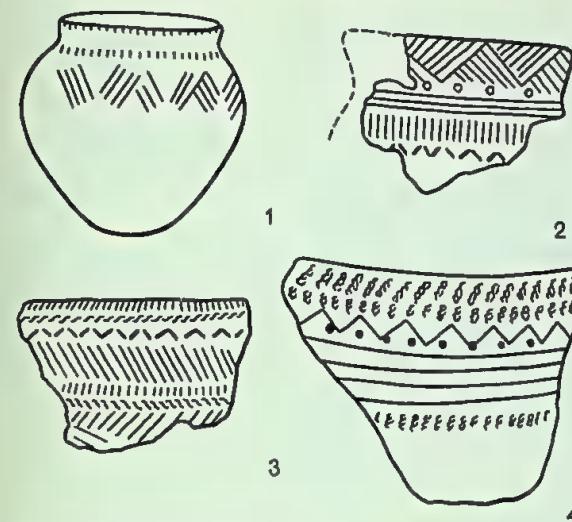


Fig. 418. Kurgan culture pottery: 1—4 — ornamentation with zigzags [352, fig. 13; 285, p. 83; 711, p. 35].

(Fig. 416). Ornamentation imitating the shape of objects made by covering baskets with clay is also not infrequent; it resembles wickerwork — rectangular, zigzag, or other types (Fig. 417). On some vessels the zigzag occurs only round the neck (Fig. 418); this may be under the influence of the ornamentation of Western European Neolithic pottery. Such influence is obvious when the vessel is decorated with a ring of suspended semiovals or triangles (Fig. 419). We have already discussed certain symbols on Ancient Kurgan ceramics (Figs. 49, 142); they seem to have been borrowed from the early farmers of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

If Proto-Indo-Europeans did make ornaments/symbols on short-lived materials, they are certainly lost to us. Generally speaking, this could well have taken place. Similarly, if one had to judge Daghestan symbolism only from designs decorating ceramic artifacts, there would not have been much to talk about. Yet the impression remains that Proto-Indo-Europeans (as well as Proto-Semites) did not have their own graphic symbolism. It appears that all symbols of the forthcoming Bronze Age can be traced to the early farmers' Neolithic symbolism.

Symbols or ornaments of early farming origin appeared on ceramic objects in the Northern Black Sea region before the extensive expansion of Proto-Indo-Europeans from that area. They could have emerged as a result of borrowing, since tribes of the Ancient Kurgan ethnic community were in touch with the early farming world, and these contacts occurred in different places at the periphery of their settlement: west of the Dnieper, in the Caucasus, and in Central Asia.

Designs on stones, unique because of their exceptional rarity, associated with the Ancient Kurgan culture [546], are zigzags and crossed rhombuses — the usual and simplest motifs in Western Asian and Eastern European Neolithic symbolism. Analogous patterns are found on coeval dolmens on the Caucasian Black Sea coast, which may point to one of the ways in which these symbols traveled from Western Asia to the Southern Russian steppes.

In addition to adoptions, early farmers' symbols could have spread to the Proto-Indo-Europeans through assim-

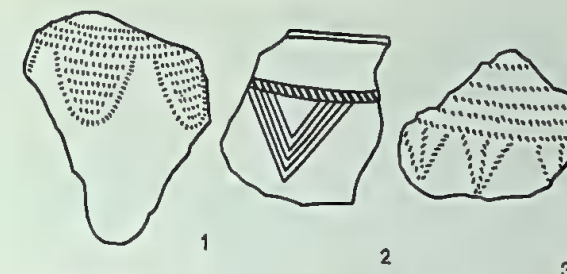


Fig. 419. Kurgan culture pottery: 1—3 — ornamentation with pendent semiovals and triangles [285, pp. 107, 109, 85].

ilation of the "linear-ribbon ceramic" culture of tribes previously inhabiting the Northern Black Sea region by the Ancient Kurgan tribes advancing from the lower reaches of the Volga.

Early farmer symbolism was intensively assimilated by new, Indo-European, Semitic, and Caucasian peoples only from about 2000 B.C., through a mass mixing of tribes of dissimilar origins.

The cult symbolism of early farming tribes, forgotten almost everywhere but remaining stable in Daghestan, is an inheritance from the period in history when people first began expressing their thoughts and their attitude to the world with the help of conventional graphemes. Therefore studies of ancient cult symbols touch upon problems that are broader than the deciphering of illegible signs. We deal here with the reconstruction of the spiritual world of human communities prior to the invention of written language. Based on the data of history, deciphering ancient symbols in itself sheds additional light on history.

Questions naturally arise: how did the symbols spread and what does their similarity among different peoples signify? Why did a wide complex of cult symbols, typical of Neolithic farmers of Western Asia and Southeastern Europe, survive in Daghestan? Why was it precisely there that the complex maintained the status of meaningful symbols, whereas tribes of the Koban culture in the central Northern Caucasus treated these symbols as mere ornamentation? How did these symbols reach pre-Columbian America, and why did the Scythians, for example, never have them? These questions, and many others, still remain unanswered.

Discovery of the meaning of ancient symbols, a matter of interest in its own right, is also of significance because it may help solve the still undeciphered mysteries of the origin of various peoples. There is still much to be learned about the ethnogenesis of Northern Caucasian mountain dwellers. Ethnogenetic conclusions cannot be based solely on similarities of cult symbols among different peoples, yet this aspect can be taken into account together with other data.

The circumstance that similar cult symbols and ornament motifs are widespread complicates the task and necessitates caution in drawing conclusions; similar and even identical cult symbol elements are often found among obviously unrelated peoples. However, even though identical cult signs were used in different places and at different times, their specific shape is characteristic of certain cultures;

besides, some symbols occur only locally. Ornamental style must also be taken into account when comparing symbols ■ ornamental elements.

Cult symbols discovered in Daghestan ■ generally of the same nature ■ in Bronze Age Europe. In Daghestan, the complex of symbols typical of ancient Europe is, firstly, uniquely complete and, secondly, extraordinarily stable. The impression is that these cult symbols were indigenous to the ancient population of Daghestan.

How can this be accounted for in view of the fact that Daghestan languages are not Indo-European? There may be two answers: 1) Daghestan symbolism continued to express notions of the Neolithic period for the ancient people who understood its meaning and was thus ■ direct non-Indo-European inheritance from Western Asian early farming tribes; 2) There was an appreciable contingent of Indo-Europeans among the ancestors of the Daghestanians, or these ancestors could have been tribes who spoke non-Indo-European languages, but had religious conceptions similar to those of the Indo-Europeans.

There is ■ significant European anthropological ingredient among Daghestanians and other mountain dwellers of the Northern Caucasus. Hordes of cattle breeders from the Southern Russian steppes invaded not only Western Europe, but also the highlands of the Northern Caucasus. But they did not bring with them the graphic cult symbolism in question: it was still extremely poor among them. The Northern Caucasian archeological materials of that time are rather inexpressive.

Mass migrations contributed to the propagation of ideas, but were not the only factor in this process: it often happened that ■ small contingent of newcomers imposed their language and ideology ■ an autochthonous population, so that anthropologically different peoples may have related languages. Also, ideas were passed on by way of intertribal contacts. Accordingly, the migration of cultural factors such ■ ideology, religion, languages, myths, and rites proceeded on a broader scale than the migration of people.

Judging by the fact that Nostratic languages spread mainly during the Neolithic Age and were disseminated across the immense territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, it can be assumed that early farming tribes of the Near East and Southwestern Europe spoke languages that can be classified as Nostratic. Later, in about the sixth millennium B.C., bearers of Sino-Caucasian languages migrated to these regions. They were most probably cattle breeders from Central Asia. Some transmitted their languages eastwards to China and as far ■ California, others marched westwards. As a result, Asia Minor was occupied by Hattians, the Basques reached beyond the Pyrenees, and the ancestors of contemporary Adygean and Nakhian-Daghestanian ethnic groups invaded the Caucasus. It was probably at the same time, and also from Central Asia, that the cattle breeding Semites emerged; some of them afterwards inherited the New Eastern early farmer cultures, while the rest continued to roam from place to place for a long time.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Bearers of proto-Semitic languages could later have migrated from North Africa to Western Asia.

T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov have suggested that the Indo-Europeans originated in the Armenian Highland [107; 108]. I. Diakonov [162] rules out this possibility, maintaining that Indo-Europeans could not have been present in the Near East during the fourth millennium B.C., from the linguistic and socio-cultural point of view. However, in the light of an analysis of ancient cult symbols/ornaments this is not altogether improbable. The point is that the symbolism/ornamentation of the bearers of the Kura-Araks culture differs strikingly from that of their neighbors in the west (the Eastern Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe) and in the east (Mesopotamia and Iran). The difference consists in that the Kura-Araks is achromatic, poor in motifs, and dry in forms, whereas throughout the remaining territory, from the Danube to the Indus, ornamentation was colorful, rich, vivid, and at the same time expressly symbolic. The tribes of the Kura-Araks culture, in terms of their art, did not belong to the ethnic contingent which, during the Neolithic, created the symbols analyzed in this book. They may have been bearers of the parental Indo-European language. It is possible that Indo-European languages spread from there eastwards during the fourth and third millennia B.C., reaching the Transcasian steppes, and then continued westwards to the steppes of the Northern Black Sea region. At about 2000 B.C., cattle breeding tribes bearing an Indo-European tongue pushed extensively into Western Europe, India, and the Caucasus, disseminating their languages, bronze weapons, and riding skills. They ruined the early farmer cultures, including the Kura-Araksian.

At the turn of the second millennium B.C. a sudden change took place in the early cultures of the Caucasus. Nearly all the Kura-Araksian settlements were abandoned. There can be no doubt that a mass invasion by alien tribes was the cause of these events. The invaders must have been Indo-Europeans: in the second millennium B.C. they spread from Western Europe to the Altai, Central Asia, Iran, and India; Asia Minor was occupied by them earlier. The Caucasus, it seems, did not remain an island in the Indo-European encirclement.

The anthropological diversity of the present-day population of the Caucasus can be accounted for by a mixing of tribes of dissimilar origin. The Caucasian population is generally believed to belong to the southern branch of the Europoid race. It falls into three types: Indo-Pamyrian, Mediterranean-Balkanian, and Anatolian. The Caucasus is the only territory where these three types of southern Europoids are found, and there is also ■ fourth type — Pontian. However, in the third millennium B.C., the Caucasian population was anthropologically more uniform.

The Indo-European substratum is felt in the Georgian language. As for the historical events which led to the formation of the Georgian people, whose language is not Indo-European, they occurred in more recent times. In the first half and the middle of the first millennium B.C., new peoples migrated to the Caucasus from the south. Traditions recorded in a medieval Georgian chronicle and reports by classical authors and Urartuan cuneiform texts point to the migration from Asia Minor of tribes absorbed by ancestors of the later Georgian people; the ancient toponymy of Asia Minor is largely explicable in terms

of the Georgian language. Sino-Caucasians (Abkhazo-Adygeians, Vainakhians, Daghestanians, Caucasian Albanians, and Caspians) were already in the Caucasus by that time. But their cult symbolism was almost nonexistent during the fifth to third millennia B.C. It did not appear in the Caucasus in developed form until the second millennium. And only during the Middle Ages it for some reason flourished resplendently in Daghestan. There is no convincing answer to this enigma; neither is there sufficient basis for a hypothesis. It only remains to assume that at some time in the past (it is impossible to say exactly when) ■ contingent of people migrated from Asia Minor or Northern Mesopotamia to the territory embracing mountainous Daghestan and the adjacent highland regions of Chechenia and Georgia.

The Caucasian Neolithic and Aeneolithic are poor in symbols. It would therefore be unjustified to seek the roots of the complex of multiform symbols existing in Daghestan in the local Neolithic or Aeneolithic. Neither can one associate Daghestan symbols carved in stone during the Middle Ages with local Bronze Age cultures, since the latter are represented in this region by very meager and rather primitive material. It is true that the Southern Caucasian and Central Caucasian Bronze Age was quite rich in symbolism, but it cannot be considered akin to the Daghestan Bronze Age culture in its concrete forms. Consequently, it is unlikely that the complex of symbols found in Daghestan could have appeared there before the beginning of the first millennium B.C.; and morphologically it gravitates strongly towards Asia Minor. Apparently it was from there and at that time that the symbols found their way to Daghestan. They were not meaningless drawings, but expressed certain ideas. They were introduced to Daghestan by people who were bearers of those ideas.

Cardinal ethnic changes have taken place in Western Siberia, the Altai, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia over the past four thousand years. Starting from the third millennium B.C., Indo-European tribes migrated to these regions, as also to Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus, so that all this territory was Europeanized by the second millennium B.C. But in the 4th century C.E. a new mass migration of peoples began; in consequence of the advance of Turkic-speaking peoples from Central Asia to the west, which proceeded in several waves over a thousand years, the Indo-European languages were there replaced by Turkic ones.

The succession of peoples, languages, and cultures did not bypass the Caucasus, in particular Daghestan. In the second millennium B.C., Daghestan and a large part of the Caucasus in general must have been Europeanized. Whatever the case, the culture of the Northern Caucasus in the second millennium B.C. was typologically similar to in the coeval cultures of Eastern Europe. It may be assumed that from 1500 to 500 B.C., tribes from Asia Minor, pressed by migrants from the Balkan Peninsula on the west and by Semites, Hurrians, and Urartuans from the south, moved to the Caucasus, including its northern area.

An even greater role in bringing Daghestan culture closer to Western Asia was played by events during the last two thousand years. From the 4th to the 15th centuries

C.E., Daghestan was repeatedly invaded by Turkic-speaking tribes; as a result, part of the population adopted ■ Turkic language. In the 5th century, the boundaries of Iran and the area of Iranian cultural domination expanded close to Daghestan. The spread of Islam in medieval Daghestan contributed to the adoption of the Near Eastern Muslim culture in the region. As a result of these events, beginning from about 600—800 C.E., changes occurred in the local artistic culture. In particular, a new ornamental style emerged — the minute vegetal ornament.

Students of early forms of religion proceed mainly on the basis of ethnographic evidence. The rites and beliefs of the peoples of Africa, Eastern Asia, and exotic islands across the ocean are the usual topics of research. Less attention has been given to the early religious conceptions of the European and Caucasian populations. These forgotten religions can be reconstructed through the study of ancient graphic symbolism.

Since the second millennium B.C., this symbolism tended to express beliefs associated with sun worship. Theoretically speaking, ■ solar cult could have emerged ■ a mythological explanation of nature's climatic cycle. Alternating seasons, the standstill of nature in winter and its awakening with the coming of spring could be seen ■ resulting from different states of the deified celestial luminary, or rather this could have been the case in the temperate zone. Yet there is no evidence that ■ solar cult existed among early cattle breeding Proto-Indo-Europeans. At the same time, certain data suggest that the solar cult emerged in the third and second millennia B.C. in the Ancient Orient, as ■ religious form of expressing socio-ethical concepts.

In either of these two cases the solar cult has nothing to do, at least originally, with agriculture. American Indians worshiped the sun, and this is true not only of Peruvian and Central American civilizations, but also of tribes who did not develop either cattle breeding or agriculture [514, p. 432]. K. Laushkin, who studied Karelian petroglyphs, writes in connection with the symbolism of the Lake Onega sanctuary: "It was somewhat unexpected to find a rather well developed cosmic cult among the Laplandians, whose main occupations were fishing, reindeer breeding, and hunting" [290b, p. 225]. This was unexpected because of the prevailing notion that cosmic cults can exist only on an agrarian foundation.

The following illustration, for example, shows that cult conceptions and their graphic expression are not necessarily connected with the character of the economy. Graphemes on cliffs in Karelia, though dating from the same period, differ in two neighboring regions: they are almost exclusively figurative near the White Sea, ■ and mostly symbolic near Lake Onega [443, Vols. 1 and 2]. There is no doubt, however, that the economic conditions of those who left the two types of pictures were identical.

The symbolism of cult conceptions of the ancient population of Europe, Western Asia, and the Caucasus constitutes a specific system expressing a relatively well developed and multifaceted view of the universe. V. Gorodtsov, a 19th century archeologist, wrote in line with the romantic

words:

Russian krest, luna, mesyats, tur, vrag, volk, vilka, voron, molot, topor, venik, venok, noč, sobaka, kobyla, stariy, strah, tsar, lukaviy, goroh, oreh, borov, boloto, beliy, obilie, more, sever, myš, moš, kaštan, kumir, kumač, koloda, tarakan, paleč, muž, kamen, pyat, krot, yama, kukia;

English hell, bull, storm, stream, frog, bolt, bird, bride, stone, fork, star;

French tir, pierre, Vendredi, mont, ciël, voile;

German sterben, Berg, Moor, Pfeil, Ziel, Frau, Herr, Albe, Volk, Mond;

Latin helix, ferus, fortis, autumnus, albens, terra, moneta, vir, virgo, virga, altaria, alma, belua, cumulus, porcus;

Ancient Greek kaliptra, pege, tauros, phallos, pyr, pyramid, pente, komos, kalon, kirkos, polos, men, therapeon;

Hebrew kallah, se'ar, hağ, huğ, hağa', taba'ath, ra', sus, šor, satan, sade, sar, çar, šeol, saraf, ašir, par, parpar,

parah, pere', barak, birah, mar, melek, melah, ba'al, leil, elil, ledah, 'ivri, pesah, devorah, Barka'i, Kiyun, maim, šamaim, bubah, gedi, gad, kelev, gadel, 'aman, šed, šadai, šir, ham, dov, selah, yareah, 'or, iš, kerem, kir, hamor.

* * *

This work is a continuation of investigations on the subject under way since the nineteenth century. Various opinions have been voiced on the problems discussed here. The present study has confirmed some hypotheses previously advanced, others were specified and modified. At the same time in many cases this study has led to new conclusions and new solutions to a number of specific questions and general problems. The procedure which made the results possible consisted of cross checking large quantities of data in order to find solutions to enigmas posed by past epochs, based on convincing argumentation.

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List of abbreviations

АН — Академия наук
 АрхН — "Архитектурное наследство", М.
 АЭС — "Археолого-этнографический сборник ЧИНИИ", Грозный
 ВДИ — "Вестник древней истории", М.
 ГИМ — Государственный исторический музей, М.
 ГМГ — Государственный музей Грузии, Тб.
 ГМИНВ — Государственный музей искусства народов Востока, М.
 ДИ — "Декоративное искусство СССР", М.
 ИГАИМК — "Известия государственной академии истории материальной культуры", Л.
 ИИЯЛ — Институт истории, языка и литературы Дагестанского филиала АН СССР, Мк.
 КБНИИ — Кабардино-Балкарский научно-исследовательский институт, Нальчик
 КСИА — "Краткие сообщения о докладах и полевых исследованиях Института археологии АН СССР", М.
 КСИИМК — "Краткие сообщения о докладах и полевых исследованиях Института истории материальной культуры", М.-Л.
 КСИЭ — "Краткие сообщения Института этнографии АН СССР", М.
 КЭС — "Кавказский этнографический сборник", М.
 ЛГУ — Ленинградский государственный университет, Л.
 МАД — "Материалы по археологии Дагестана", Мк.
 МАК — "Материалы по археологии Кавказа", М.
 МАР — "Материалы по археологии России", СПб.
 МАЭ — Музей антропологии и этнографии, Л.
 МГУ — Московский государственный университет, М.
 МИА — "Материалы и исследования по археологии ССР", М.-Л.
 МКАЭН — Международный конгресс антропологических и этнографических наук, М.
 МЭР — "Материалы по этнографии России", Л.
 ОРЯС — Отделение русского языка и словесности Академии наук, СПб.
 СА — "Советская археология" (журнал), М.
 СА — "Советская археология" (сборник), М.-Л.
 СМОМПК — "Сборник материалов для описания местностей и племен Кавказа", Тифлис
 ССК — "Сборник сведений о Кавказе", Тифлис.
 СЭ — "Советская этнография", М.
 ТГУ — Тартурский государственный университет, Тарту
 ТЭС — "Труды по знаковым системам", Тарту
 ТСАИАИ — "Труды секции археологии института археологии и искусствознания", М.
 УЗ... — "Ученые записки..."
 ЧИНИИ — Чечено-Ингушский научно-исследовательский институт, Грозный
 ЭО — "Этнографическое обозрение", М.
 ЯС — "Яфетический сборник", Л.

AEA — "Archivo Español de arqueologia", Madrid
 AI — "Ars Islamica", Ann Arbor (U.S.A.)
 AJA — "American journal of archaeology", N.Y.
 IPEK — "Jahrbuch für prähistorische und ethnographische Kunst", B.
 JHS — "Journal of Hellenic studies", L.
 RA — "Revue archéologique", P.
 ZE — "Zeitschrift für Ethnologie", B.

Л — Ленинград	В. — Berlin
М. — Москва	L. — London
Мк. — Махачкала	N.Y. — New York
Пг. — Петроград	P. — Paris
СПб. — Санкт-Петербург	
Тб. — Тбилиси	